

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga: Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu young adult**  
Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the  
Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigated the narratives of nine Māori young adult students. The primary objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and various challenges confronting this group of Māori students. Many Māori students who enrol at Te Kura as *young adults* seek to gain the qualifications that they have not achieved while at face-to-face schools. This group of students have sometimes been referred to as a part of New Zealand's "tail of underachievement" (Education and Science Committee, 2008).

The schools these students attended prior to coming onto the roll of *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu* [The Correspondence School] were all located in the *Waitaha* [Canterbury] region of New Zealand's South Island. Each of these schools was, to varying degrees, dominated by what appeared to be a Eurocentric institutional culture of schooling. The study's findings resonate with those of previous studies; however, while these student accounts echoed the sentiments of students in previous research studies (Macfarlane, A. H., 2004; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Penetito, 2005; Manning, 2009) the narratives of each student focused closely up on the challenges these students faced as Māori students in this context.

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology underpinned by a *Kaupapa* Māori [translation] philosophy and narrative research methodology. Therefore the voices of the participants was at the forefront of this research rather than lost in a sea of quantitative data. Prior to this study, no research had focused explicitly on the educational experiences of Māori students enrolled with *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura)* in *Te Waipounamu* [South Island of New Zealand]. This research consequently offers fresh insights into the challenges Māori students face, today, in English medium, state-funded schools located in the *Waitaha* area. A number of key themes emerged from the participants' accounts of their schooling experiences and directly related to policy guidelines, relevant research and an extensive body of academic literature.

The participants in this study constituted a unique group of resilient young adult Māori students. Their narratives indicate that they have overcome many of the challenges they encountered in their previous face-to-face schools and re-storied their learner identities. As a result, their narratives provide insights that deserve a response from their communities, teachers and policy decision-makers.

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview	1
Rationale	1
Thesis structure	3
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>5</b>
Introduction	5
The research problem	5
The ecological systems model.	6
Literature pertaining to <i>Chronosystem</i> and <i>macro influences</i> that are relevant to the research problem	10
Institutional racism and loss of Indigenous peoples' voice	10
The loss of land, language and heritage.	13
Literature pertaining to exosystem factors	13
Part One: The local (Ōtautahi) ecology of place and local tribal histories prior to 1839	14
Part Two: The Treaty of Waitangi and the impact of colonisation upon Māori in the Waitaha region since 1840	17
Literature pertaining to Mesosystem factors	20
Literature pertaining to my position as a teacher/researcher in relation to the research problem at the microsystem level	23
Research objectives and questions	27
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>28</b>
Introduction	28
The influence of Kaupapa Māori research upon the qualitative research design	28
Negotiating the research design and entry into the field	31
Data collection procedures	32

<b>Data Analysis procedures</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Ethical considerations</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA FINDINGS</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Profile of the participants</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Participant narratives</b>	<b>41</b>
Participant One.	41
Participant Two.	42
Participant Three.	45
Participant Four.	47
Participant Five.	50
Participant Six.	52
Participant Seven.	54
Participant Eight.	56
Participant Nine.	57
<b>Conclusion: Recurring themes that emerged from the narratives data</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>63</b>
Peer relationships.	63
The participants' relationships with their former teachers.	70
Whānau support and whānau/school relationships.	75
<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>78</b>
Teacher vs student centred pedagogies.	78
The hidden curriculum.	80
<b>Learner identity</b>	<b>84</b>
Re-storying of learner identity.	86
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Limitations</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Summary of the research</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Research implications</b>	<b>92</b>

Closing reflections	94
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>95</b>
Appendix A: Information sheet for the Board of Trustees: Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu	95
Appendix B: Consent Form for the Board of Trustees, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu	97
Appendix C: Information sheet for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu student participants	99
Appendix D: Consent form for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu student participants	101
Appendix E: Information sheet for transcriber	103
Appendix F: Declaration of confidentiality form for interviews transcriber	105
Appendix G: Interviewee verification of interview	107
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>108</b>

## **TABLE OF FIGURES**

<b>Figure 1:</b> A diagram illustrating this author's interpretation of the absorbing communities theory of Maggie Papakura (1938). .....	7
<b>Figure 2:</b> Diagram illustrating this author's interpretation of the differing systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model that recalls the absorbing community's model of Papakura (1938) and provides a framework for my literature review. ....	9

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Overview

This introductory chapter first describes the rationale for this piece of research. It draws upon some personal memoirs from my experiences as a teacher in a low decile secondary school, and later as an employee at *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu* [formerly the Correspondence School of New Zealand], to help set the scene for this study. Next, I will provide an outline of the overall structure of this thesis. This passage will serve to give a sense of purpose and direction by concisely describing the various components of each chapter in this study.

## Rationale

In 1991, I began my teaching career at a low decile State-funded secondary school, located in the Hutt Valley. During that first school term, I can well-remember walking into the staffroom one lunchtime and seeing a Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) article pinned to the wall, near the photo copier. From memory, its headline read something like this: "Māori students feel invisible in New Zealand schools". This headline drew my curiosity because over 50% of the students in that school identified themselves as Māori. Given the demographic profile of that school, as a Pākehā I struggled to see how Māori students could possibly feel "invisible" in school especially in the first school that employed me. Every day, I walked across the concrete quad ground to teach my classes I would observe the students milling around outside the standardised, H Block buildings that housed my classroom. In that first term of my teaching career, I could certainly see that many of the students I taught were Māori and Pasifika, but I felt there was little difference between their school environs and those of the (working class) school I had attended a few kilometres away. I wrongly assumed therefore that my students' experiences of schooling would be no different from my own experiences in the Hutt Valley, just out of the capital city, Wellington.

In 1990, as a new graduate, fresh out of The Christchurch College of Education, I was full of good intentions. I naively believed that my recent history degree, focusing on New Zealand race-relations (and taught by Professor James Belich), accompanied by my attendance at *Te Reo Māori* [Maori language] night classes for beginners, taught at Victoria University of Wellington; would somehow give me a good foundation for teaching Māori students in a local

secondary school. I was mistaken. I was ill equipped to deal with many of the complexities I encountered as a teacher at that school. I was still oblivious to how Māori students could feel invisible due to their interactions with their teachers and/or school institutional cultures. Today I am grateful for the life-lessons I learned from students and colleagues at that secondary school. What I learned from students, and from others since 1991, contributed to the identification of the problem central to this thesis.

In 2002, I began teaching English at the head office of the Correspondence School of New Zealand in *Pōneke* [Wellington]. The Correspondence School was later renamed *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura)*, and is commonly abbreviated to *Te Kura*, a convention I follow for the remainder of this thesis. After working for *Te Kura* for six years, my family moved to Ōtautahi [Christchurch]. Since 2008, I have served as a member of the leadership team attached to the Ōtautahi regional office where I have worked with many Māori students who had left school at the age of 16 years – without the qualifications needed to gain employment or further education. Of further concern, *Te Kura* has a large number of Māori students on its national roll and many of these students are officially - labelled *alienated* or *excluded* from traditional face-to-face schools. For example from 2000-2006 the number of alienated and excluded students on the Correspondence School's roll increased from 876 to 1,518 and in 2006, 46% of these alienated and excluded students were Māori (Education and Science Committee, 2008).

Statistics such as these eventually prompted Judge Andrew Beecroft (2008) to ask: “whether the Correspondence School has become a dumping group for students who cannot survive in secondary education” (Education and Science Committee, 2008, p. 31). These alienated and excluded Māori students are inevitably associated with “the group of underachievers” or “the long tail of underachievers” referred to by Government bureaucrats as a source of official concern (Education and Science Committee, 2008). What I have learned over the years, however, is that each of these Māori students has a name, life experiences, and a story that is worthy of hearing. Their voices, however, have often been lost in numerous official quantitative studies which have rendered them silent.

This research was, accordingly, developed to listen to the narratives of young adult Māori students who have elected to recall why they have journeyed out of face-to-face schools and onto the roll of *Te Kura*. Their narratives are rich and insightful. The participants in this study



reveal many important lessons for teachers and schools in the *Waitaha* region to consider. The following passage now describes the structure of this thesis.

## **Thesis structure**

This research commences with a literature review chapter (Chapter Two) which will begin by describing the research problem in greater detail than the rationale passage provided above. To support this process it will refer to Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecological systems model* to afford a structure to shape my argument about the research problem in relation to literature relevant to the multiple contexts within which the research problem is cushioned. It then draws attention to a similar ecological viewpoint as proposed by a Māori scholar Maggie Papakura (1938). Her original *absorbing communities* model (Macfarlane, A. H., 2001) provides a point of academic contention that emanates from *Te Ao Māori* [the Māori world] and deserves careful consideration by those applying Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems model* to Māori research settings. After considering the strengths and weaknesses of the ecological systems model, I will then further outline my role as a Pākehā teacher/researcher in relation to the research problem and complete this chapter by offering the research questions that will underpin this study.

Chapter Three sketches the research objectives and the methodology behind both phases of the whole data collection process. It commences by charting the influence of *Kaupapa Māori* research models upon the qualitative design of this study. It then explains how the research design was co-constructed with key stakeholders, before I outline the qualitative data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations that informed this study. Chapter Four, meanwhile, will address the research findings by affording a précis of the data collected through the semi-structured interviews process. The first portion of this findings chapter will deliver a demographic profile to outline the group's age range, gender and iwi affiliations. The section that follows it will then introduce each participant by fleetingly recounting their background and delineating some of their significant replies to questions asked throughout their pre-interview questionnaires and interviews. Noteworthy things that could have prejudiced their schooling experiences will also be deliberated.

To conclude, this methodology chapter will introduce the key themes that were identified during the analysis of the data. Chapter Five, meanwhile, will scrutinise the recurring (key) themes that materialised from the findings described previously in Chapter Four. To repeat, the key themes to be deliberated here will be: (i) relationships, (ii) pedagogy, and (iii) learner

identity. Thus, the first of the three key themes to be described will be the impact of relationships. A set of three sub-themes will be discussed to afford a configuration that permits an acute analysis of the sorts of relationships that proved to be of principal concern to the participants. These sub themes include, peer relationships, relationships between teachers and students, *whānau* [family] support and whānau/school relationships.

Afterwards, attention will be given to the second key theme of pedagogy. This conversation will also require deliberation of a set of relevant sub themes. The key pedagogical sub-themes to be discussed at this stage will comprise the following: teacher centred versus student centred pedagogies, the hidden curriculum, and institutional constraints. A conversation addressing the final key theme of learner identity will next unfold. It will focus upon the participants' resilience evident in the re-storying of their learner identities after their departures from face-to-face schooling. The final chapter of this study (Chapter Six) will then launch with a brief examination of the limitations of this research. I then reiterate the overarching research procedures and significant results, before considering the general implications of these findings. The closing chapter provides some final reflections on the issue identified by the research participants and a pertinent *whakataukī* [proverb].

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This literature review chapter will commence by describing the research problem. It then draws upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecological systems model* to provide a framework to organise the discussion about the problem in relation to literature relevant to the historical, international, national, regional and local (institutional contexts within which the research problem is nestled). Moreover, particular attention is paid to contextual factors relevant to the Waitaha region – which provides the principal setting for the problem addressed by this research. In addition to drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's model, I will refer to a similar (earlier) theoretical model proposed by the prominent Māori scholar Maggie Papakura (1938).

Her *absorbing community's* model provides an ecological contention that emanates from Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) that remains relevant to the lived experiences of the Young Adult Māori students who participated in this study. After using these ecological models of human development to set the scene for this research, I will describe my role as a Pākehā teacher/researcher in relation to the research problem. I will then conclude this chapter by introducing the research questions that have guided this study.

### The research problem

Academic research, specifically focusing on the educational experiences of Māori students enrolled with Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) in Te Waipounamu has, to date; not been conducted. This situation is problematic because it has the potential to leave Māori students and their whānau, voiceless. This scenario inevitably leaves Te Kura teaching staff based in the Ōtautahi regional office without the necessary information required to identify and respond to the real (not perceived) needs of the Māori students they teach. This is challenging because, as the literature review which follows will indicate: an extensive body of literature demonstrates that teachers need to listen to their Māori students and their whānau and listen to their culture (Macfarlane, A. H., 2004; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Penetito, 2005; Manning, 2009).

The following passages draw upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecological systems model* to provide a structure for discussing the research problem in relation to relevant literature and the

different sociocultural contexts that inform the problem. Before proceeding to discuss these contexts, the passage below briefly describes Bronfenbrenner's model.

### **The ecological systems model.**

Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that interlinking *social systems* surround each child and this is important when understanding the context of Māori students in the New Zealand education system and particularly those enrolled with Te Kura (whose voices are central to this research). Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems model* may be a new development in western psychology, but is still very similar to the work of Māori scholar Maggie Papakura (1938) which A. H. Macfarlane (2001) described as an *absorbing communities* theory. According to Macfarlane, Papakura was writing about a Māori ecological perspective of human development as early as the late Nineteenth Century.

In her theoretical model, Papakura referred to the individual as being absorbed in the whānau, just as the whānau was absorbed inside the hapū, and the hapū within the iwi. A. H. Macfarlane thus concluded (2001, p. 18) that Bronfenbrenner's *ecological* theory is, "no more sophisticated than Papakura's absorbing communities theory, except that the latter thought of it first." As a result, it is important to remember that each Māori student enrolled with Te Kura is impacted by a number of *ecological* factors as illustrated in the following diagram (see Fig. 1.0; overleaf):

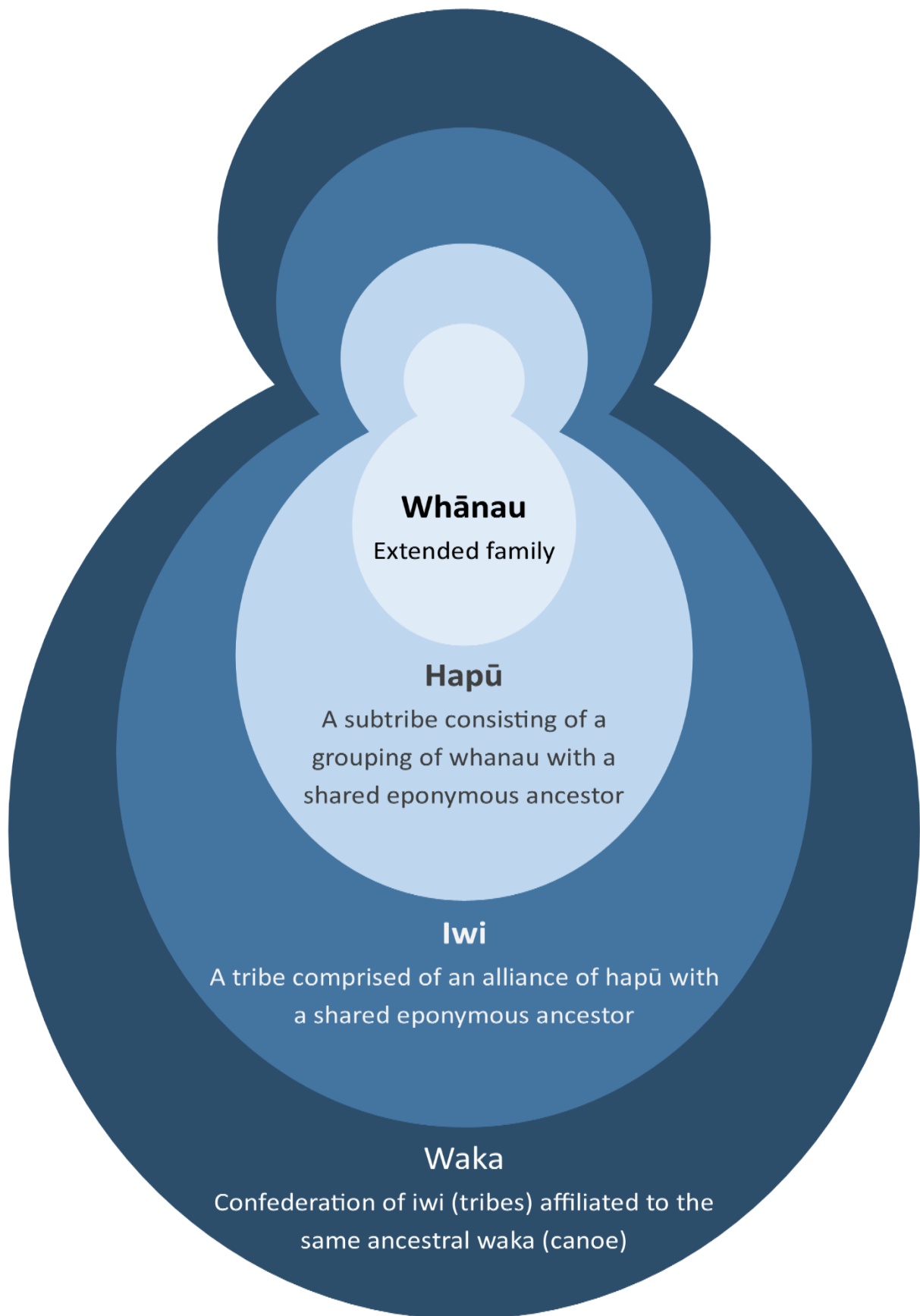


Figure 1: A diagram illustrating this author's interpretation of the absorbing communities theory of Maggie Papakura (1938).

When further describing Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems model*, Bird and Drewery (2001, p. 12) began with a concise description of the *microsystem*, which encompasses a child's immediate environment and refers to family members or members of a class at school. In relation to the purpose of this literature review, the microsystem alludes to the immediate familial setting experienced by each participant (i.e. his/her whānau).

The outer *mesosystem* refers to a system of connections that link *microsystems* together, such as "relationships between parents and teachers that bring the world of home and school together" (Bird & Drewery, 2001, p. 12). For the purposes of this literature review, the *mesosystem* will allude to interactions between Māori students enrolled with Te Kura (and those specifically affiliated to the Ōtautahi regional office). It also alludes to interactions between students themselves, interactions amongst Te Kura teachers, plus between Te Kura and the students' whānau/caregivers (where applicable). According to Bird and Drewery (2001, p. 12), the third outer structure of Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems model* is referred to as the *exosystem*. The *exosystem* includes, public media, such as television, communities and neighbourhoods.

The next outermost structure is the *macrosystem* and this, as Bird and Drewery summarised, refers to, "large cultural patterns which include social class and the political system of the country" (Bird & Drewery, 2001, p. 12). The outermost *chronosystem* was (later) added by Bronfenbrenner to address criticisms that his model had not addressed transitions and changes that occur in one's life span and inform changes over time within each of the inner levels of the ecological systems model (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). The following diagram (see Fig. 1.1; overleaf) illustrates the *ecological systems model*, which provides a framework to guide the discussion central to the literature review that follows it:

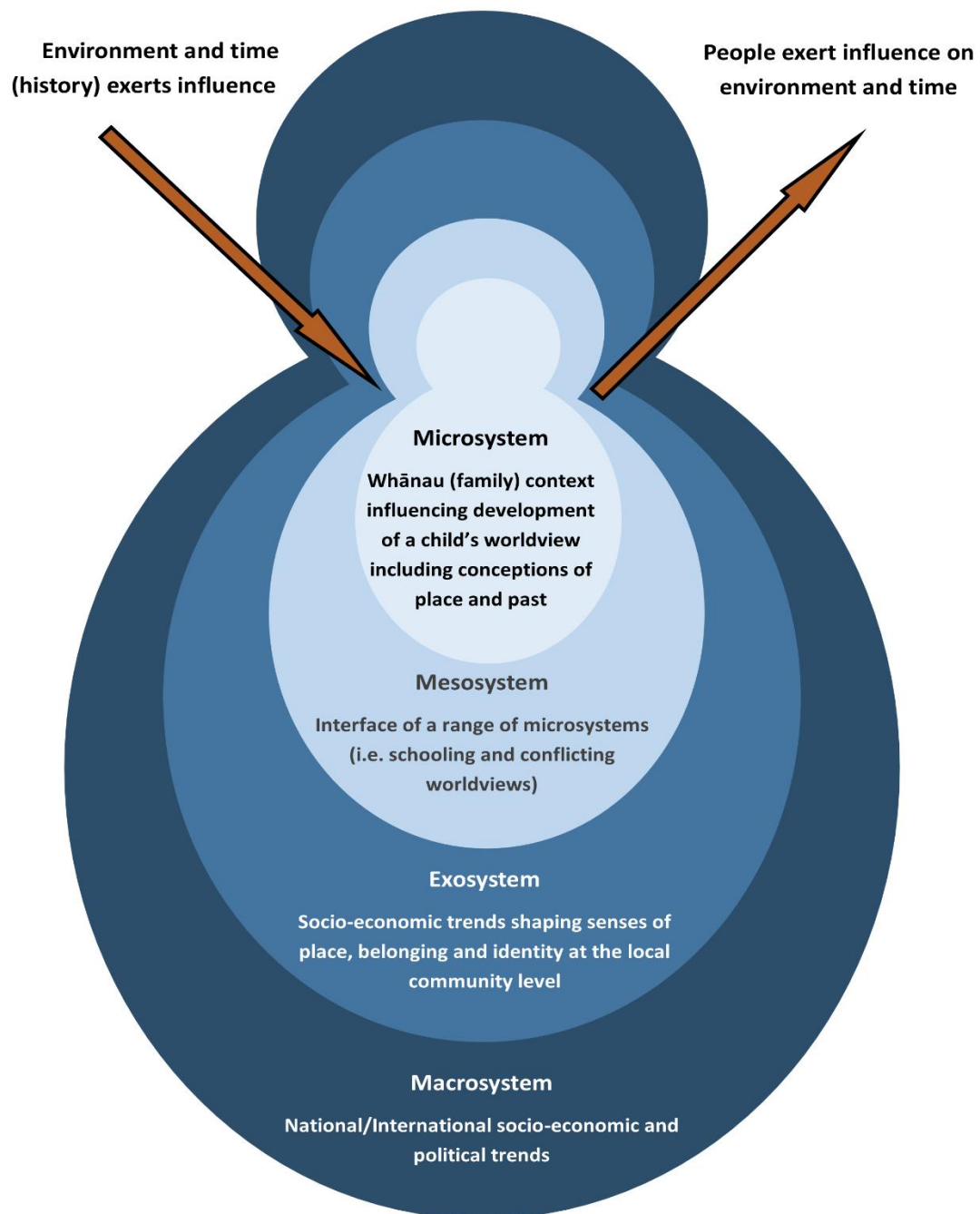


Figure 2: Diagram illustrating this author's interpretation of the differing systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model that recalls the absorbing community's model of Papakura (1938) and provides a framework for my literature review.

Having described the *ecological systems model* and its relevance to the structure of this literature review, the next passage examines what academic and research literature has to say with regard to the research problem and the influence of the outer-most *chronosystem*.

### **Literature pertaining to *Chronosystem* and *macro influences* that are relevant to the research problem**

With regard to the plight of Te Kura (Māori) students central to this research, numerous writers, have identified historical forces as playing a pivotal role in the alienation of Māori students from the New Zealand schooling system (see Walker, 1987; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Macfarlane, A. H., 2001, 2004; Macfarlane, A. H., Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman 2007; Penetito, 2004, 2005; Manning 2009, 2011, 2017b). It is also significant that Australian, American (US) and Canadian researchers have drawn similar conclusions about the predicament of Indigenous students, families and communities in those countries.

For example, Harrison (2008), Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999), Banks and McGee-Banks (2010), Battiste (2013) and Cajete (1994), and Berryman et al., (2014) have all identified the impact of colonisation and questions of power-relationships as being critical to understanding contemporary experiences of schooling for Indigenous and other ethnic minority students, globally. As a result, my review of the national and international (*macrosystem*) literature emphasised that the two following recurring and overlapping (*chronosystem*) major research themes continue to impact upon Indigenous students locally, nationally and internationally. These overlapping themes (discussed below) include:

- Institutional racism and loss of Indigenous peoples' voice (caused by unequal power relationships between the colonisers and the colonised);
- the loss of land, language and heritage (underpinned by deficit theorising associated with government assimilation and integration education policies)

### **Institutional racism and loss of Indigenous peoples' voice**

According to Walker (1987), the New Zealand education system has been an obvious practitioner of institutional racism through its exclusion of Māori language and culture. He proposed that this pedagogy and attitudes of racial superiority amongst educationalist is at the heart of Māori withdrawal from schooling. Bishop and Glynn (1999) also emphasised the detrimental impact of colonisation for Māori students in the New Zealand education system.



Scott (1982) and Manning (2009), meanwhile, stressed the significant role of mechanical time in the process of assimilating Māori people through a process of schooling that compartmentalised knowledge via rigid timetabling systems. Against this backdrop, authors like McKinley (2000) and Bishop (2003) suggested that New Zealand's current educational policies and practices were not ideologically neutral. Rather, they were developed (and continue to be developed) within a binary historical framework of power imbalances between the colonisers and colonised.

Historically, those ideologies underpinning the process of institutional racism tend to so-called privilege the dominant (Pākehā) cultures' deficit theories that explain-away deficiencies in Māori student's academic outcomes and other behaviours. As Bishop (2003) advised, the New Zealand education system has long-been dominated by the imposition of Pākehā settler knowledge codes. These dominant codes, in turn, have both marginalised and trivialised Māori epistemologies. This position is supported by many writers, particularly G. H. Smith (1990), Adams et al. (2000), Penetito (2004, 2005), A. H. Macfarlane (2004), A. H. Macfarlane et al. (2007), and Manning (2009; 2011; 2017a, 2017b).

The 'oppressive' historical (i.e. *chronosystem*) nature of colonisation in rendering Indigenous voices silent recalls the work of Freire (1970) and Banks and McGee-Banks (2010). It is also a recurring theme in the international literature reviewed for the purposes of this study. With regard to the Canadian context, for example, Battiste (2013, p. 23) argued that Indigenous students have been part of a "forced assimilation plan where their heritage and knowledge has been rejected and suppressed and ignored by the education system." The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings supported Battiste's stance when it reported (2013, p. 56) that:

Canada's residential school system for Aboriginal children was an education system in name only for much of its existence. These residential schools were created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal [Indigenous] children from their families, in order to minimise and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society.

In Australia, there has also been an unequal power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over the last 220 years. This history has also been marked by a the forced assimilation plan which has involved massacres of Aboriginal people, relocation of Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands to reserves and the eventual removal of Aboriginal children from parents to attend distant boarding schools that would so-call civilise them in an English medium of instruction. This history has had a significant impact on the formation of Australian school policies and curricula; leaving many Indigenous Australians feeling alienated from Australia's schooling system and wider society (Harrison, 2008).

Overtly assimilationist education policies have also had a major impact upon Māori schooling in New Zealand from the Nineteenth Century through to 1960; leaving many Māori feeling alienated from the New Zealand schooling system and wider society (Adams & Clark, 2000). Likewise integrationist policies, since 1960, have contributed to this situation (Barrington, 2008; Walker, 2004; Simon, 1986; G. H. Smith, 1990). For example, Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) and matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) have long been seen by decision-makers as outmoded and irrelevant. This draws attention to the historically-grounded cultural politics of curriculum control so eloquently described by G. H. Smith (1990, p. 193) below:

The control over what is regarded as valuable knowledge and, therefore what is to be taught in schools, is maintained by numerically dominant Pākehā people who occupy positions of decision-making within the education system ... Where consultation has occurred with minority interest groups [i.e. Māori], it has often been to seek answers which conform to the liberal preconceptions of 'state dominate' Pākehā interests ... In this way, the real power lies within the dominant Pākehā population who are able to control what is taught, how it will be taught and by whom it will be taught.

As a result, many Māori have, historically speaking, had their rights to speak and learn in their native tongue undermined and forcibly replaced with the English language of the coloniser (Macfarlane, A. H., Webber, Cookson-Cox & McRae, 2014; Cooper, et al., 2010; Manning, et al., 2011; Martin, 2016). As G. H. Smith (1990), above, and others have also suggested; Māori were initially offered a restrictive curriculum aimed at keeping the native population deliberately undereducated and prepared for a range of menial jobs which would serve the dominant monoculture (Jenkins & Mathew, 1998). Colonisation also resulted in the loss of an

economic base for indigenous people and for many indigenous people that legacy is a hard cycle to escape.

### **The loss of land, language and heritage.**

Various writers have highlighted the part that socioeconomic disparities play in disadvantaging children within the education system (see Chapple, Jefferies, & Walker, 1997; Marie, Fergusson, & Boden, 2008; Marshall, Coxon, Jenkins, & Jones, 2000; Thrupp, 2006, 2008). According to the *Child Poverty Monitor* report, (Duncanson et al., 2015), 1 in 6 New Zealand European (i.e. Pākehā) children live in poverty, whereas Māori and Pasifika children are twice as likely to be living in poverty. It is important, therefore, to note that despite the negative legacies of colonisation, many Māori students have still succeeded in New Zealand state schools. As A. H. Macfarlane et al., (2014) contend, there has been little attention given by researchers to those students who have succeeded but rather a preoccupation with identifying Māori student deficits.

Māori initiated education strategies, namely kōhanga reo and kura Kaupapa, have also been an important tool for reestablishing a focus on Māori language, culture and identity within education for Māori students. Likewise, more attention needs to be given to seeking the voice of those Māori students who have been alienated from traditional face-to-face schools. Having described the significance of the problem in relation to overlapping *chronosystem* and *macrosystem* literature, the following passage now considers the research problem in relationship to the relevant *exosystem* literature regarding the immediate environs encompassing the Ōtautahi regional office. It is, after-all, the local community where I and other Te Kura staff have most of our *kānohi-ki-te-Kānohi* [face-to face] interactions with Māori students and their respective whānau.

### **Literature pertaining to exosystem factors**

This passage is comprised of two parts. First, it will examine the ecology and pre-colonial history of the place that encompasses the Te Kura regional office, where I was based during this study. This office is located in *Pūtaringamotu* [the place of the echo], now more widely known as Riccarton. Second, it will outline the impact of colonisation and Crown land alienation and Māori schooling policies locally – during the Post-Treaty era (1840 onwards).

## **Part One: The local (Ōtautahi) ecology of place and local tribal histories prior to 1839**

Ngāi Tūāhuriri, a hapū (subtribe) of the Ngāi Tahu iwi (tribe), are the Manawhenua of the rohe (area) in which the Te Kura Ōtautahi regional office is located. Moreover, the role of Ngāi Tūāhuriri encompasses most of Christchurch City and two of its major surrounding townships (Kaiapoi and Rangiora). Tau and Anderson (2008) indicated that Ngāi Tūāhuriri trace their tribal origins back to Paikea, an ancestor who originally lived in the Polynesian homeland of Hawaiki. Ngāi Tūāhuriri ancestry can, consequently, be linked to the Ngāti Porou people of the North Island's East Coast.

Meanwhile, Ngāi Tahu refers to the descendants of an eponymous ancestor named Tahu Pōtiki. In the early eighteenth century, the Ngāi Tūhaitara hapū ancestors of today's Ngāi Tūāhuriri hapū began a gradual migration from the East Coast of the North Island to Te Waipounamu (South Island). During this migration to Te Waipounamu, intertribal battles were fought against the Rangitāne, Ngāti Māmoe and Waitaha iwi (Tau & Anderson, 2008). Through a pattern of warfare, shifting tribal alliances and strategic marriages, the ancestors of Ngāi Tahu eventually established themselves in Waitaha (the Canterbury region).

R. Tau, cited in the Department of Internal Affairs' *Te Ara* website (2013), advises that just north of Horomaka (Banks Peninsula), a Ngāi Tūhaitara chief named Tūrakautahi built what became the largest fortified village in the South Island (Kaiapoi Pā). It lay on the site of a stronghold of an earlier iwi, Waitaha, whose history and traditions Ngāi Tūāhuriri and other Ngāi Tahu hapū eventually absorbed. By the end of the Eighteenth Century Ngāi Tahu hapū had occupied the West Coast and had travelled as far as Foveaux Strait, making alliances with both the Ngāti Māmoe and Waitaha tribes in the process (Tau and Anderson, 2008).

As indicated earlier, Te Aho o Te Kura's Christchurch Office is located at a Riccarton Road address directly opposite the *Westfield Mall*. This area was visited seasonally by Ngāi Tūāhuriri food-gathering parties in the 1800s and food gatherers from other iwi beforehand (Christchurch City Libraries, 2013; Tau T.M., Goodall, Palmer, & Tau, R., 1990). In the wider area there were two pā (village) sites. One pā, or kaika (temporary settlement), was sited near the present day site of the *Bush Inn* shopping centre in Upper Riccarton. It seems to have been a seasonal camp. Much of this pristine area, first encountered by the earliest Waitaha peoples to enter the area; was probably covered in swamp and dense forest. It was thus a highly valued mahinga

kai (food gathering) site. A large percentage of this forest was later destroyed by a great fire during the early pre-colonial period (Christchurch City Libraries 2013; Tau T.M., et al., 1990).

Despite this rich history of place surrounding my workplace, conversations with my colleagues and students (during the course of this literature review) suggested that they too were largely unaware of this ecological history of place prior to my research. This was despite the fact that a few of the large majestic Matai, Totara and Kahikatea trees have survived and can still be easily viewed by Te Kura staff from their office windows. Today, the area immediately surrounding the site of Te Kura's new Regional Office is a sprawl of busy roads, shopping malls and residential housing. Previously, however, it was a dense maze of swamp, forest, waterways and lagoons. The area was, subsequently, a valuable food source for local tribes prior to 1840 (T.M. Tau et al., 1990).

There was an abundance of birds, including kereru and Kiwi. In earlier times, Waitaha ancestors probably hunted the now extinct moa. Tuna (eels), īnanga/kōkopu (fish) and koura (freshwater crayfish) were readily found in the waterways of Pūtaringamotu. There are also some interesting stories associated with the place name, Pūtaringamotu (T.M. Tau et al., 1990). It loosely translates to 'the place of the echo' or 'the severed ear' (a place isolated from others). The 'place of the echo' is a reference to the great fire that swept through Ngā Pakikihi whakatakateka o Waitaha during the moa hunter period (T.M. Tau et al., 1990). Manawhenua also believed that those with the right training could hear people approaching on the trails through the surrounding swamp (T.M. Tau et al., 1990; Christchurch City Library, 2013).

After Captain James Cook's initial visit to Te Waipounamu, the next major influx of British visitors were sealers and whalers who had been encouraged by Cook's reports of prolific seal colonies. These sealers, whalers and traders (after some initial skirmishes) eventually formed relationships with Southern Ngāi Tahu hapū located around coastal areas of Murihiku and Ōtakou (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013; Tau & Anderson, 2008). Both the newcomers and Ngāi Tahu hapū saw benefit in forming a mutually beneficial trade relationship which, in turn, fed into the wider Ngāi Tahu trade network. Food, water, timber, and other items were traded for new European commodities such as steel tools and muskets.

By the 1830's, Ngāi Tūāhuriri and other local hapū had also developed a thriving trade supplying ships visiting Horomaka (mainly from Sydney). These ships' crews were offered potatoes, pigs and wheat in exchange for various items including muskets. The introduction of muskets as a trade item would eventually have a devastating effect upon Ngāi Tūāhuriri and

their relatives. Firstly, a feud developed between the Northern and Southern hapū of Ngāi Tahu. According to Tau and Anderson (2008), the Kaihuanga (eat relatives) feud was an implosion of kinship that tightened the chains of family, aligning the Otago and Southland Ngāi Tahu with their Ngāi Tūāhuriri kinsfolk at Kaiapoi.

Tribal battles were common and part of what Tau and Anderson (2008, p. 10) described as the “habitual instability of tribal society”. However, the Kaihuanga feud of the late 1820’s came at the worst possible time for those Ngāi Tahu hapū engaged in an internal civil war. Whilst divided amongst themselves, Ngāti Toa Rangatira (Ngāti Toa), led by Te Rauparaha and other chieftains (including those of other iwi), launched a series of raids into the Waitaha region in retaliation for the death of Te Pēhi Kupe and other Ngāti Toa chieftains at Kaiapoi (Ballara, 2003; Collins, 2010; Tau & Anderson, 2008). These raids eventually culminated in the destruction of the Kaiapoi Pā in 1838, when up to 600 people were killed (Tau & Anderson, 2008). Ngāi Tūāhuriri and other local Ngāi Tahu were (temporarily) displaced and sought refuge with their relatives in existing Southern settlements and new refugee settlements located in South Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Ngāi Tahu’s most populous and fertile areas of territory, consequently, lay largely abandoned only ten years before the beginning of Crown land purchases (Tau & Anderson, 2008).

## **Part Two: The Treaty of Waitangi and the impact of colonisation upon Māori in the Waitaha region since 1840**

The signing of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (signed by Ngāi Tūāhuriri & other local Ngāi Tahu hapū near Akaroa) coincided with the arrival of more British settlers in Te Waipounamu. This increased settler pressure upon Crown authorities for an increase in land purchases to occur. In 1841 the Crown's Lands claims Ordinance, also known as the Waste land Act; was formalised. Under this legislation Ngāi Tūāhuriri lands, like those of other Ngāi Tahu hapū, could be seized by Crown officials if the Crown deemed that these lands were not be used for cultivation purposes. Not surprisingly, Ngāi Tūāhuriri interactions with the Pūtaringamotu landscape and its flora and fauna were gradually eroded in the 1840s (Evison 2006; Christchurch City Libraries, 2013; T.M. Tau, et al., 1990).

John and William Deans (brothers from Scotland) applied for permission from Crown authorities to farm at Pūtaringamotu, which they renamed Riccarton. Land was given by Ngāi Tūāhuriri on the condition that they did not settle near Ngāi Tūāhuriri plantings (Tau., T. M., Goodall, A., Palmer, D., & Tau, R, 1990; Christchurch City Libraries, 2013). However, in 1846, the Dean's brothers bargained with Ngāi Tūāhuriri for more land and a 21 year lease was signed for the land running 6 miles in every direction from Pūtaringamotu.

This purchase included the land upon which the Te Kura Regional Office is now sited (T.M. Tau, et al., 1990). By 1848 the New Zealand Company bought land from Ngāi Tūāhuriri under the terms of Kemp's deed (Evison, 2006). The Dean's brothers were allowed to have 400 acres. Over time, pieces of the Deans farm would be sold off and developed into residential housing as the suburbs of Riccarton and Ilam emerged (T.M. Tau, et al., 1990).

Kemp's deed signed in Akaroa in 1848 was signed by 16 Ngāi Tahu chiefs and great parts of land were sold for less than a fraction of a penny per acre (Evison 2006). Various Ngāi Tahu hapū, including Ngāi Tūāhuriri, were to be given back large reserves of land once the surveying had been done. When Walter Mantell mapped the land in 1848 he reduced the size of the promised reserves allowing less than 4 acres per head instead of the promised 10 acres (Evison 2006, Tau, et al., 1990). He also withheld from Ngāi Tūāhuriri, and other Ngāi Tahu hapū, some of their cultivated lands and food gathering places (Māhinga Kai).

Māhinga kai has always been a central cultural focus and a crucial link to Māori senses of identity and well-being. This was a significant loss for Ngāi Tūāhuriri and their relatives from

other hapū. The loss of lands and Māhinga Kai, on such a massive scale was the subject of successful Ngāi Tahu Waitangi Tribunal claim (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, 2018). This claim was initiated by Rakihiia Tau of Ngāi Tūāhuriri amongst other prominent Ngāi Tahu leaders. As well as increased alienation from land and traditional food sources, the Māori language (commonly spoken alongside English for trading purposes) also came under attack from legislation aimed at reforming the so-called “Native” schooling system.

The Native Schools Act (1858) and Native Schools Act (1867) insisted that only English was to be spoken in New Zealand schools (Walker, 1997). This policy was a deliberate attempt to assimilate Māori into British colonial culture. Māori epistemologies (worldviews), language (including tribal dialects), ontologies (ways of being) and subsequent place knowledge were targeted for extinction by an assimilationist schooling system (Walker, 1987; Manning 2009). Nationwide, evidence suggests that the adoption of the English language appeared to be the only means available to many Māori for surviving within a colonial New Zealand society committed to assimilationist and integration policies (Walker, 1987). Within Canterbury, and other rural regions, Phillips (1987) and Coney (1990) suggest that a pioneering, cultural identity of Pākehā males has dominated discourses of New Zealand identity.

Despite recent Government policies to remedy the loss of Māori language (1979 onwards); some Māori communities and whānau remain impacted as a result of being denied access to Te Reo Māori in schools and other public places for several generations. Locally, Ngāi Tahu hapū of the Waitaha region have experienced at least five generations of language loss (Martin, 2016). This has had a traumatic impact and remains a source of deep concern to local Ngāi Tahu people. As Martin (2016) explained:

Ngāi Tahu place names are recorded in te reo Māori. These names are a significant part of Ngāi Tahu history, as from these place names comes Māori identity, Māori origin, Māori whakapapa [genealogies]. The language of the landscape signifies areas that are of importance to the landscape users and are indicators of values, knowledge and beliefs, ideologies, and views of the ways the world is shaped (Carter, 2005). Knowledge of the local environment is incorporated into the language to enable management of resources. This is so for the Māori language and culture in New Zealand and for Ngāi Tahu iwi.



Reflected in these names are features of the landscape, names of people or events, some are descriptive names like Waimakariri (cold water) and some place names have journeyed on waka from East Polynesia (Hawaiki) with New Zealand's first human occupants. Some Hawaiki names are based around creation and origin myths or stories of real people who have become part of the myth. Some place names are also just ancient names that we do not know the meaning of (Stokes, 2003; *Te Karaka*, 2009). The name Hawaiki is debated in regards to being a mythical place or as being a specific geographical location (Howe, 2003). These place names are part of the development and shaping of a [contemporary] Ngāi Tahu Māori identity (Ngāi Tahutanga) in Ōtautahi via Te reo Māori. (Martin, 2016, p. 31-32)

Another factor one must consider, in relation to contemporary Māori education in the Ōtautahi and wider Waitaha areas, has been the increase in the local Māori population following World War II. This involved many Māori migrating to the urban suburbs of Ōtautahi in pursuit of work. This urban-drift migration, in turn, resulted in the development of new forms of local Māori social networks to support the urbanisation process. This, in turn, led to the creation of urban, pan-tribal marae alongside other facilities to specifically Māori health and leisure initiatives.

To reiterate, these urban marae and Māori institutions were not based-upon tribal affiliations but were set-up to serve Māori who had travelled to Ōtautahi from largely North Island regions to gain employment or training. As Ranginui Walker suggested, these marae often sought to serve, "individuals who lack a sufficient number of kin in the same suburb or town, voluntary associations on a multi tribal basis substitutes for kin (Walker, 1989 p. 159, as cited in Barcham, 1998, p. 305).

Rehua Marae, for example, was set-up in 1960 as a base for Māori Trades Training students who arrived in Ōtautahi from the North Island. Another urban Marae, named Ngā Hau e Whā, opened in 1990 to serve the needs of Matāwaka – or those who live in Ōtautahi; but have tribal affiliations in other regions. In Ōtautahi today, Matāwaka equate to 70% of the Māori population, whereas 30% of the local Māori population affiliate to the Ngāi Tahu iwi (*New Zealand Geographer*, 2016). Māori students served by the Ōtautahi regional office of Te Kura subsequently affiliate to a wide range of tribal groupings from around New Zealand. Urbanisation, like elsewhere in Aotearoa/New Zealand has also led to the emergence of multi-ethnic families, cultural hybridity and questions regarding notions of cultural authenticity (Webber, 2008).

The recent Canterbury earthquakes have also led to a recent (new) wave of North-South Māori migration into Ōtautahi to participate in the rebuild process. According to Pickles (2016, p. 58), the local Māori population increased during the period 2006-2013 by 12.4%. This was a bigger percentage increase than that experienced by either Wellington or Auckland during that same period. Having described some of the key local (i.e. *exosystem*) ecological factors that have informed the schooling of Māori students residing in Ōtautahi, and particularly those who are enrolled with Te Kura; the following passage now considers relevant literature relating to *mesosystem* factors emerging from within Te Kura, itself.

### **Literature pertaining to Mesosystem factors**

Te Kura is New Zealand's distance education provider for compulsory education. It has a large and diverse roll. After the last Education Review Office (ERO) review in 2015, ERO reported that Te Kura had 12,500 students nationwide and overseas. Over the whole of 2014, 24,500 students were enrolled. Te Kura is also the largest provider of compulsory sector education services to Māori in New Zealand and the number of Māori enrolled is increasing. It is worth noting that 17% of those students enrolled in the Te Waipounamu (South Island) roll identified themselves as Māori. To date, however, no academic research has specifically explored the educational experience of Māori students enrolled with Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura), formerly known as the Correspondence School of New Zealand.

The Te Kura roll is diverse. It is made-up of students who are full time students or secondary dual students. Full time students are those recognised by the Ministry of Education as being so-called 'alienated' from school or those have psychological reasons for not attending. Also included in this category are students who have been expelled, teen parents and Young Adult students who gain free entry to Te Kura at the age of 16 years. Secondary dual students, meanwhile, are those enrolled with Te Kura for curriculum coverage but are located within other (face-to-face) schools or institutions. For example, Te Kura caters for students affiliated to Department of Corrections' students and Alternative Education Centre providers.

The Young Adult student gateway to enrolment at Te Kura was initiated in 2008 and its numbers have steadily grown. Many of the students in this category are Māori students who have left secondary schools without basic qualifications or the qualifications required to go onto enrol in higher education or vocational training providers. On 22 February 2011, Christchurch suffered a significant earthquake which resulted in death, injury and much

property damage on a large scale. The earthquake, and subsequent after-shocks, had a significant impact on the education of many students living in the area.

The 2011 earthquake and after-shocks provided a unique set of challenges for schooling in Christchurch that no other New Zealand region has faced. The Christchurch earthquake sequence was exceptional in that it continued for over two years. Researchers such as Liberty and S. Macfarlane (2013) believe many children and young people still suffer from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Te Kura received a number of quake-related enrolments from students who no longer felt safe attending school in buildings or who had been alienated from schooling by their anxiety or distance from their local schools. A significant number of Māori students in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) live in the lower socioeconomic Eastern suburbs, which were hardest hit by the earthquakes. Research also demonstrates that Māori children and young people are proportionately more likely to be exposed to the impacts of poverty than the average New Zealand child (Imlach, Gunasekara, & Carter, 2012; Fergusson & Boden, 2015).

Nationally, Māori students make up about one third of Te Kura's roll and these students are less likely to remain on the roll for a full year, participate fully in learning or complete qualifications. The vast majority of Māori students are, nationwide, enrolled in so-called 'main stream' schools and most Māori students enrolled with Te Kura have come from these schools. As A. H. Macfarlane et al. (2014) have stressed Māori underachievement in the main stream schooling system has provided a rich source of data for the continued expansion of deficit theorising according to Atweh, Bland, Carrington, and Cavanagh (2007), Hinden-Miller and Higgins (2013). This trend is evident in the data often collected from Te Kura by Crown agencies such as the Ministry of Education, Education Review Office (ERO) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

The fact that Māori students are represented in such high numbers on the roll at Te Kura clearly mirrors the Ministry of Education's own findings that Māori students have higher school suspension rates and receive more behavioural referrals to education services (Ministry of Education, 2007a). Despite a range of initiatives and a drop in expulsion and suspension rates for Māori, in 2014, the age-standardised stand-down rate for Māori (36.4 stand-downs per 1,000) was 1.5 times higher than Pasifika (24.7 stand-downs per 1,000), and 2.5 times as high as European/Pākehā: 14.8 stand-downs per 1,000 (see Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Therefore, the over-representation of Māori learners in referrals to special education and in suspension and expulsion rates has been of concern to special education researchers such as Bevan-Brown, Glynn, A. H. Macfarlane and S. Macfarlane and their works are widely cited throughout this study. Their research indicates that many behaviour referrals for Māori learners result from misinterpretation by teachers of particular behaviours (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2007). Nationally and locally, researchers have also identified that Māori teachers are, in addition to their official workloads, often given the extra responsibility of meeting the pastoral needs of these so-called ‘problem’ Māori students (Bloor, 1996; Clarke, 2010; Torepe, 2011, Macfarlane, A. H., 2014; & Paniora, 2017).

Transition from primary to secondary school is a time of particular challenge for many Māori students (Cocklin, 1999; Hornby & Witte, 2014). Another critical issue facing many New Zealand schools, and Māori students, is the issue of bullying. Quantitative research by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2015) revealed that just over ¼ of New Zealand students reported they experienced some form of bullying. This often contributes to the alienation experienced by students enrolled with Te Kura.

Quantitative data has its limitations, most notably, it does not have the ability to give voice to the participants in relation to interpreting the data or give it any depth of meaning. It is difficult therefore to describe the experiences of Māori students enrolled in Te Waipounamu without having qualitative data that captures their insights, let alone to draw conclusions about whether Te Kura is meeting the needs of diverse Māori community groupings in Te Waipounamu. While national research suggests that some progress has been made in improving the overall senior Māori student performance between 2007-2008 (Ministry of Education, 2007a), these students continue to perform less well in national qualifications than their non-Māori peers in face-to-face education settings (ERO, 2009).

ERO, furthermore, suggested that the key challenge for Te Kura would be to find ways of keeping Māori students connected to learning (ERO, 2009). The Young Adult student gateway to enrolment at Te Kura, consequently, opened in 2008. As indicated previously, many of the students in this category are Māori students who have left secondary schools without basic qualifications or the qualifications required to enrol with higher education or training providers. In recognition of the need to improve Māori students’ academic achievement levels at Te Kura, a *Māori Learners Success Framework* (MLSF) was developed and implemented by Te Kura in 2006 and informed by the research of Gardiner and Parata (2006).

The MLSF reflects an aspirational approach to Māori education. It aligns closely with the ethos of the Ministry of Education's (2008) *Kā Hikitia: Managing for success. Māori Education Strategy (2008-2012)*. *Kā Hikitia*, like the MLSF, places emphasis on "Māori students enjoying success as Māori" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 4). In 2008, Te Kura restructured its organisation to support the MLSF and the thrust of *Kā Hikitia*. Te Kura was reorganised into a regional learning delivery and support model. A regional presence seeks to strengthen connections with students, their whānau and community groupings, including iwi with Manawhenua status (customary authority/rights) in those regions.

There are now four regional offices matching the four Ministry of Education designated areas, Auckland (Northern), Hamilton (Central North Island), Wellington (Central/South North Island) and Christchurch (South Island). The following passage now serves as a position statement. It locates me in relation to both the research problem and relevant academic by providing a brief description of my workplace role and my subsequent interest in the research problem.

### **Literature pertaining to my position as a teacher/researcher in relation to the research problem at the microsystem level**

When reflecting upon my own familial (*microsystem*) and professional (*mesosystem*) experiences as a Pākehā (i.e. white) woman teacher/researcher, an extensive body of national and international literature suggests that I *am* writing from a position of privilege. Whether I like it or not, I am inevitably part of a global historical legacy of white women teachers in colonial schooling systems who have served, and continue to serve, as agents of civilisation, colonisation and imperialism. For example, the Nineteenth Century US educator, Catherine E. Beecher (cited in Leonardo and Boas, 2013, p. 318); echoed a view similar to many of her white peers in New Zealand (see Walker, 1987; Manning, 2009), when she proclaimed that:

Soon, in all parts of our country, in each neglected village, or new settlement, the Christian female teacher will quietly take her station, collecting the ignorant children around her, teaching them [the] habits of neatness, order and thrift; opening the book of knowledge, inspiring principles of morality, and awakening the hope of immortality.

In recognising this historical (i.e. *chronosystem*) legacy that impacts upon my position as a teacher/researcher, I also have to confront the place of Pākehā/white women in the contemporary New Zealand educational settings where large numbers of Pākehā women

teachers continue to serve the Crown/New Zealand State. With regard to Beecher's proclamation, above, Leonardo and Boas (2013, p.320) asserted that, today:

The White female teacher benevolently serves the nation through her good intentions of saving children of colour. Her feminised whiteness is a kinder gentler whiteness, an 'imperial feminism' of sorts (Coloma, 2011), which allows her to reproduce the White, patriarchal nation.

Many teachers and educational leaders in New Zealand, today, are still white women, and (like me) are teaching in schools where Māori and Pasifika school student rolls are rapidly growing due to the overall 'browning' of New Zealand's demography. The school I currently teach in, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) has the largest roll of Māori students in New Zealand. These students are often on the Te Kura roll because they have officially been 'alienated' from face-to-face schools around New Zealand. It is therefore important that I and other Pākehā teachers at Te Kura interrogate our own Pākehā identities and senses of cultural-locatedness to better understand that our relationships with Māori and other students of minority ethnic and cultural groupings do have structural and historical roots that effect their schooling experiences.

The power imbalances that subsequently exist within contemporary white teacher/Māori student relationships have often informed by prevailing white (i.e. Pākehā) ideologies of racial superiority (Ballara, 1986; 2003, Leonardo & Boas 2013; Manning 2009, 2017b). Critical Race Theory literature subsequently offers me a way of understanding the unique impact on education that Pākehā teachers, particularly Pākehā women, have had (and continue to have). It provides a set of theoretical lens to enable all 'white' teachers to reflect and consider ways to take action and avoid playing a part in the continued reproduction of racism. Leonardo and Boas (2013) suggested that the following four principles would greatly assist white Teachers to deconstruct their own racism. They contend (Leonardo & Boas, 2013) that White Teachers should:

- Critically reflect on racialised and gendered histories and how white teachers are implicated in them.
- Make race and race history part of the curriculum, and fight for its maintenance within the curriculum.
- Teach race as a structural and systemic construct with material, differential outcomes that are institutionally-embedded not reducible to identities.

- Work to understand and teach race not as a personal crusade but as a sociological historical construct through which we are all (unequally) produced. (Leonardo & Boas, 2013, p. 322)

These principles remain very relevant to me, today given that in my role, as a Team Leader I held responsibility for overseeing improved learning outcomes for all Māori students in Ōtautahi and the professional development of teacher colleagues. These principles (Leonardo & Boas, 2013) helped me to challenge myself and my colleagues to grapple with similar questions already faced by many other ‘white’ teachers, internationally, who have also reflected critically upon their ‘whiteness’ and their privileged position in schooling systems, globally.

As McIntosh (1988, p. 292) rightly suggested, “describing white privilege makes one newly accountable....we must ask, having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?” In response to this question, I will now explain from my perspective my role within the wider *mesosystem* setting of Te Kura and with regard to the research problem central to this study. This may go some way to explaining why I wished to undertake this research in the first place. When I commenced this study, I held the position of Team Leader of the Ōtautahi regional office. In our office we have 30 teachers. It is their legal, ethical and moral responsibility to meet the pastoral and curriculum needs of Te Kura students residing in Ōtautahi and other parts of Te Waipounamu. A significant number of students are Young Adults who are second chance learners having already left a mainstream secondary school. As a Team Leader, I held responsibility for overseeing the Professional development of the teaching staff and developing events and programmes that help them to support Young Adult students, many of whom happen to be Māori.

To support this process further, Te Kura participated in the *He Kākano* professional development programme facilitated by the University of Waikato and Te Wānanga o Āwanuiarangi (2009-2011). This programme required myself and other Te Kura staff affiliated to the Ōtautahi regional office staff to individually and collectively reflect upon our personal dispositions and senses of cultural-locatedness as described by authors like Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, and Richardson, 2003). This reflective process enabled us to develop deeper understandings of the complexities and diversity of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) and to inform our teaching practices and policy formation procedures.

Te Kura teachers working in Ōtautahi are required to examine assessment data to develop a deeper understanding of issues relating to the achievement levels of Māori students affiliated to their regional office. At the outset of this research, the only information collected by Te Kura had been quantitative data that examined the academic achievement of Māori students nationwide. This data often painted a grim picture of educational under-achievement of Māori students enrolled with Te Kura but it did not appear to capture student or whānau voice. Therefore, this situation held wider implications.

Te Kura has statutory responsibilities to uphold the Treaty rights of all of its Māori students (New Zealand State Services Commission 2005; Ministry of Education, 2007b). This includes those affiliated to Manawhenua (Ngāi Tahu) and other iwi deemed – matāwaka (i.e. people from other tribal territories beyond the Ngāi Tahu takiwā/territory). All Māori students have Treaty rights, including the right to be heard (New Zealand State Services Commission, 2005; Hayward, 2009).

Therefore, it was timely to conduct research that specifically sought the ‘voice’ of Young Adult Māori students who were not specifically targeted as a distinct cohort of research participants, by either the *Te Kotahitanga* research team (conducted nationally) or by Clarke (2010), Paniora (2017); who each conducted their studies, locally, in the Waitaha region. This observation (above) is not to discredit the work of my peers, or that of more experienced researchers (Bishop et al., 2003). Rather, it simply illuminates a figurative ‘hole’ in a growing body of local and national Māori educational research that this study specifically seeks to address.

The positive influence of Bishop et al., (2003), Clarke (2010) and Paniora (2017), upon the design and objectives of this project; is discussed during my description of the methodology that follows later in Chapter Three (methodology). To conclude this review, it is important to note that while there have been initiatives to develop a relationship with a diverse range of Māori community groupings, within Te Waipounamu, since the inception of the regionalisation strategy; there has been no specific research focusing on the educational experiences or needs of Māori students on Te Kura’s roll in Te Waipounamu. Ultimately, this study addresses that gap in the research literature and the following passage outlines the research objectives and questions that have driven this study.



## **Research objectives and questions**

The messages from the literature appear to be clear; a research project that allows a more localised qualitative approach is urgently required to respond to the needs of Māori students affiliated to the Ōtautahi regional office of Te Kura. The primary objective of this research, therefore, is to provide a case study that gives insights into the complexities of teaching at the local level in a Te Waipounamu setting. As the literature suggests, New Zealand's academic policy and research over the last decade has largely focused on North Island contexts.

This has the potential to result in generic approaches to Māori education and leave Māori students and their whānau in Ōtautahi (and elsewhere in Te Waipounamu) without any voice within that body of research. As a result, the following ethnographic research questions were developed to address the research problem and underpin the discussion of the research design discussed in the following section of this proposal (below):

1. What are the experiences (positive and/or negative) that have brought Māori students, living in Te Waipounamu, onto the Te Kura roll?
2. How have those experiences (positive and/or negative) influenced/impacted on their educational goals and aspirations to date?
3. What do these students see as their personal strengths?
4. In what ways, and by whom, could these strengths be developed to enable students to reach their potential.

Having concluded this review of academic, policy and research literature (Chapter Two), and summarised the research objectives and questions; the following chapter (Chapter Three) will outline the methodology which underpinned this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research objectives and the methodology underpinning both phases of the overall data collection process. It begins by outlining the influence of Kaupapa Māori research upon the qualitative design of this research. Next, it addresses how the research design was negotiated before discussing the qualitative data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations that informed this study.

### **The influence of Kaupapa Māori research upon the qualitative research design**

Qualitative research approaches can provide a ‘rich description’ of young people’s lived experiences which are all too often missing from the discourse and interpretations accompanying quantitative data (Hinden-Miller 2012, p.87). Kaupapa Māori theorists like L. T. Smith (1999), suggested that qualitative research methods were the most culturally appropriate research tools for understanding the experiences of Young Adult Māori students, residing in Waitaha (Canterbury). As stated previously (Chapter Two) their voices were the focus of this study because they had not previously been sought. This was not surprising given that prior to the *Te Kotahitanga* research project; there was very little research on Māori student experiences of schooling, which focused specifically on capturing student voice.

The *Te Kotahitanga* project team pointed-out, that fundamental to this notion of authorising student perspectives is the issue of power, a basic concern of Kaupapa Māori research theorists (Bishop, 1996; L.T Smith, 1996, 1999). This stance was well-articulated by Bishop et al., (2003 p. 35) who suggested:

When power is shared by those who currently maintain control and dominance over others, then those in powerful positions will better understand the world of the ‘others’; those “othered” by power differentials will be able to more successfully participate in educational systems.

The *Te Kotahitanga* project team (Bishop et al., 2003) explained that they set-out to investigate what factors influence the educational achievement levels of Māori students and what these students envisage as being changes needed to improve their schooling experiences. Unfortunately, all but one of the schools that participated in this project were located in the

upper North Island and only one South Island school participated. This school was not located in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region but on the West Coast of Te Wai Pounamu (South Island). Much was still learned, however, from the methodological and theoretical frameworks that underpinned this high profile national project and adapted to fit the objectives of this study.

Most significantly, the first phase of the *Te Kotahitanga* project (2003) was designed to construct a series of student narratives that specifically described their schooling experiences. This data collection approach was chosen by Bishop et al., (2003) because it empowered Māori students to voice their own understandings of their classroom experiences and how these had influenced their academic achievement levels. The *Te Kotahitanga* research team concluded that there was a need for teachers to challenge their own deficit theorising (low expectations of students) and enhance their pedagogical habits. Thus, my research sought to adapt the *Te Kotahitanga* methodology to capture the voices of Young Adult Māori students residing in Waitaha.

Previously, Clarke (2010) and Paniora (2017), conducted research in Ōtautahi and the surrounding Waitaha region which, to varying degrees, adopted and adapted portions of the *Te Kotahitanga* methodology to interview small groups of Māori students specifically engaged in face-to-face schooling. Clarke (2010) did this, primarily, because he sought to explore questions related to student retention levels in Te Reo Māori medium programmes in English medium schools located within the Waitaha region. Paniora (2017), meanwhile, sought to explore what ‘Māori succeeding as Māori’ meant to his participants and their whānau. My research design, however, differed in focus to the work of Clarke (2010) and Paniora (2017) because it specifically sought to capture the voices of a small group of Young Adult Māori students who were no longer engaged in traditional face-to-face schooling programmes for a variety of reasons.

Another important Kaupapa Māori research project relevant to the overall design of this study was the *Kā Awatea* project (Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014). This project team, led by Professor Angus Macfarlane, used a mixed methods approach and was underpinned by Kaupapa Māori research theories to present an iwi case study of Māori student success in the Te Arawa tribal area (i.e. Rotorua). The approach for *Kā Awatea* team was “concerned with utilising Māori principles and practices and a Māori philosophy or worldview in constructing the research process, as well as with understanding the research outcomes” (Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014,

p. 49). The project's overarching aim was to conceptualise a "model for success"; based on Te Arawa "distinctiveness" (Macfarlane, A. H. et al., p. 12).

It seemed timely, therefore, to conduct a qualitative research project that sought to engage the voice of Māori students specifically affiliated to the Ōtautahi regional office of Te Kura. I also felt it was necessary to conduct this study in response to a more recent report from the New Zealand Auditor General on Māori Education titled, *Education for Māori: Relationships between schools and whānau* (2015). This report strongly emphasised the importance of relationships between whānau, students and schools. Although 600 primary and secondary students in both the North Island and South Island were surveyed for their views on the relationship between schools and whānau; Te Kura students and whānau were not surveyed. This oversight was a cause for concern due to the fact that Te Kura engages with many Māori students at risk of not achieving Level 2 before leaving school.

Unlike the North Island focus of much of the other research discussed above, Hinden-Miller's (2012) research sought to record young women's narratives of parent and education support provided specifically in Waitaha. She used a narrative methodology, consistent with the Kaupapa Māori research approaches discussed above, to interview young women and family members from a local teen parents' school community. The student participants probably had interactions with Te Kura as secondary-dual students and some were Māori (but no information was provided by Hinden-Miller about these students' hapū or iwi affiliations).

With regard to these students' needs, Hinden-Miller (2012) observed that while quantitative research could provide an overview of the demographics and sociological contexts of teenage pregnancy, qualitative research was also, "needed to provide the rich descriptions of these young people's lived experiences which were missing from the discourse and interpretations accompanying quantitative data" (p. 87). She drew upon the works of Barone (2007) and Goodson (2008) to propose that narrative methodology gives voice to teachers and learners whose voices may have otherwise not been recorded or considered by educators and policy makers.

The student participants in Hinden-Miller's (2012) study welcomed the opportunity to speak-out about their experiences. They had much to say about the differences between the institutional cultures of the Teen Parent School and the schools they had experienced. Hinden-Miller also cited the study of Wilson and Huntington (2006, p.70) to argue that much of the quantitative research around teen parents (nationally) 'pathologises' teenage parenthood. She

argued that it is culturally biased and reflects a largely middle-class Pākehā worldview. Moreover, it places a negative focus on teenage parenthood and is dismissive of the perspectives of the teenage parents.

Hinden-Miller (2012) claimed that a sound qualitative research approach, alternatively, has the potential to give voice to teenage parents and would not deficit theorise them. Her argument resonated with the logic of Kaupapa Māori research which also suggests that much of the quantitative research around the (so-called) long academic tail of Māori academic underachievement (nationwide) has ignored the voices of Māori students (Bishop et al; 2003; Macfarlane, A. H., et al., 2007). Notably, Hinden-Miller also suggested that accessing the voices and experiences of learners in educational contexts can enhance the possibilities of systemic changes, particularly for ‘minority group’ learners, marginalised in mainstream educational contexts (2012, p. 90).

Many of the Māori students on Te Kura’s roll, who are categorised as ‘Young Adult’ students, have been ‘alienated’ in mainstream educational contexts beforehand. As a result, these ‘alienated’ students have not gained the qualifications they need in order to gain employment or entry into the tertiary education sector. Given the nature of their experiences, the following passage now outlines how the research design and access to the student participants was negotiated.

### **Negotiating the research design and entry into the field**

As a Pākehā teacher/researcher, employed by Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura), presented a range of potential benefits and risks. Consequently, I met with the CEO of Te Kura (Mr Mike Hollings) and my regional manager (Mrs Beverley Jackson) on several occasions to discuss the research concept and the potential benefits and risks of conducting this research. As a result of this series of discussions I was able to design a formal research proposal. I was then encouraged by the Chief Executive of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Mr Mike Hollings) and my research supervision team to provide more detailed information to the Board of Trustees (BOT) of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (see Appendix A) and an informed consent form (See Appendix B). This approach was made once approval to proceed with this project had been received from the University of Canterbury (UC) Human Ethics Committee and the UC Ngāi Tahu Research Advisory Group.

After receiving the informed consent of the school's BOT, I sent a similar information sheet to prospective student participants (See Appendix C), who had expressed interest in participating in this study after being initially invited by their form teachers to do so. I met with the nine student participants and some of their whānau members. Eventually nine signed an informed consent form agreeing to participate as (see Appendix D). In the information sheets (See Appendix A & C) I advised the BOT and prospective student participants that I was prepared to provide any requested follow-up information, about myself, if requested to do so. Ultimately, the BOT was able to decide, from an informed position, whether or not they would proceed any further in this research. Cultural protocols were observed and these will be discussed in detail later in the ethical considerations passage of this chapter.

## **Data collection procedures**

This phase of the research required the completion of pre-interview questionnaires and a series of semi structured interviews with nine Māori students, who were enrolled with Te Kura and residing in Waitaha. These interviews were transcribed by a transcriber who had been provided with a detailed information sheet (Appendix E) and who subsequently signed a formal confidentiality form (see Appendix F).

As Bell (1999) suggested, semi-structured interviews provided me with a degree of adaptability not otherwise possible in a structured interview preoccupied with the participant(s) answering the preconceived questions of the interviewer. I found, furthermore, that Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 103) were correct to advise that “the interview takes on a shape of its own.” Semi-structured interviews therefore allowed room for follow-up questions and clarification to be sought. This would not have been possible if adhering to a more structured interview.

To that end, it was also interesting to observe that the *Te Kotahitanga* project research team established an interview process called ‘spiral discourse’ whereby the interviewer and the interviewee co-constructed a mutual understanding by means of sharing experiences, thoughts and reflections Bishop et al., (2003, p. 224). By adopting a similar narrative methodology, I was able to access the stories and lived experiences of Young Adult Māori students in an ethical manner. I interviewed each student after completing an initial preliminary discussion where they had the option of being accompanied by a support person, of their choice, who could assist them to make an informed decision whether to participate in this project or not. For verification purposes, I provided each of the participants with a transcribed copy of their interview. This

afforded them an opportunity to clarify or further develop their statements made during their interview; if they felt it were necessary (see Appendix G).

## **Data Analysis procedures**

Thematic analysis procedures were used to guide the data analysis phase of this research. This focused on identifying patterned meaning across a dataset. Trends and patterns were identified across the data to inform responses to the research questions. To identify trends and patterns, I recorded and transcribed each interview to produce a series of interview transcripts. Whilst recording, I also wrote reflection notes. Key concepts and themes were identified and coded. A system of coding conventions was then developed similar to that described by Bogdan & Biklen (2007). This allowed me to consider the themes that emerge from the data. Themes were then regrouped into a separate document for consideration.

The thematic analysis central to this research was influenced by a similar process adopted by A. H. Macfarlane et al., (2014); which, in turn, was informed by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006). My thematic analysis process consequently involved the adoption of the six phases of thematic analysis developed by Macfarlane et al. (2014, p. 52). Hence, my process first required familiarisation with the data, whereby I had to become familiar with the raw data – by reading and re reading the transcripts. I was also able to re-listen to the (recorded) interviews. The next step in my thematic analysis process required coding. In short, a code of labels was developed to help me identify important features that may have been important to answering the research questions. Next, I needed to develop a thematic identification procedure.

The codes and collated data were examined to identify patterns of meaning or potential themes. The data was then collated around each theme. This was followed by a reviewing of themes process whereby my themes were checked against the data set to determine whether they were telling a consistent story of the data and to check whether they were relevant to the research questions. This provided me with the opportunity to discard or rework themes. The following step involved me defining themes so that a detailed analysis of each theme could take place. Each of the themes were named and the focus of each theme was determined at that point. Finally, I entered the writing-up phase. This phase necessitated the weaving together of data extracts, plus my analysis of the narratives and pertinent literature. This, in turn, assisted me to contextualise my analysis.

The data analysis procedures stance I adopted was also intentionally similar to that of Hinden-Miller's work (2012). This stance was adopted because I was mindful that when you are only using conventional thematic analysis extracts of data it can easily become disconnected from the narrative contexts and undermine the integrity of individual stories. For example, Hinden-Miller (2012) addressed this challenge by citing Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 52), who observed that: "Segmenting and coding may be an important, even indispensable, part of the research process, but it is not the whole story."

I was also aware that Hinden-Miller (2012) approached the analysis of the narratives of each participant using the work of Riessman (2008), who advised fellow researchers to ask the following questions of the narrative(s) they have recorded:

1. Thematic analysis: What is she saying? What are the key themes around which the narratives are constructed?
2. Structural analysis: How is she saying it?
3. Dialogic analysis: What impact does the narrative context, both local and social, have on her story?
4. How can we make sense of her story within the broader context of theoretical frameworks and cultural narratives?

The adoption of this frame work enhanced the rigour and reliability of this research because the participants' language and context(s) were consistently taken into account. As Yin (2011, p. 20) suggested, such a process contributes to an "adherence to evidence." To further ensure that adherence to evidence occurred, each of the participants were given a printed transcript of their interview and the opportunity to discuss and change any part of the raw data presented to them. The overall data was then collated from across all the interviews and organised into codes. The coded data was, in turn, organised into categories under headings. Throughout the data analysis, themes emerging from the data were discussed with my research supervisors to check for validity.

As stated elsewhere, an undertaking was given to ensure that the findings of this research would be presented verbally to the Te Kura Board of Trustees, the research Māori advisory group and student participants (see Appendix A & C). Another assurance was given to present the findings to the staff of Te Kura in Christchurch and nationally if invited to do so. All the key research stakeholders were informed that this dissemination process would be assisted by the production of an executive report that briefly summarises the research problem, objectives, methodology



and key findings (see Appendix A & C). Key stakeholders were also advised that the research findings would be further disseminated via national and international academic journals and relevant academic conferences, symposiums and hui (if invited to do so).

In order to address issues of rigour and reliability, I found that the insightful work of Yin (2011) was particularly helpful. Amongst other things, Yin (2011) advised that:

Qualitative research needs to describe and document qualitative research procedures so that other people can review and try to understand it. Furthermore data must also be available for inspection so that the work can be scrutinised in terms of criticism, support or refinement.” (Yin, 2011, p. 19)

Consequently, I set out my research by paying careful attention to outlining the research procedures, describing my theoretical framework and by providing a transparent position statement (as a researcher). I also recorded my reflections in a journal at each stage of the research in order to be transparent about my own reactions and bias and how this may impact on the research process. This process of transparency was supported by Patton (2001, p. 555) who commented that, “not only should research be systematic in its methodology but authenticity is achieved when one’s own experiences and an appreciation for the perspectives of others and the values that under-grid them are fairly depicted.”

By presenting interview transcripts back to each of the Young Adult Māori participants, I sought to honour the participants, as a teacher-researcher, by engaging with them as equal-partners in a robust verification process. As a Crown agent (i.e. teacher), employed by a Crown entity (i.e. school); I felt it was important that my data analysis process was consistent with the core principles of “partnership” and “active protection”, central to the Crown’s ‘principles for action on the Treaty of Waitangi’ (New Zealand State Services Commission, 2005, pp. 14-15). This (Treaty-based) ‘partnership’ approach, it could also be argued, aligned with the thrust of Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton’s (2001) analyses. They suggested that checking field notes and early analyses with participants is important to ensure trustworthiness. They termed this process the “rigours of reciprocity” (Harrison & MacGibbon et al., 2001, p. 323). Through this Treaty-based partnership process I was able to engage with the participants in triangulating my data, or as Patton (2001, p. 555) described it, “seeking to capture multiple perspectives than seek a singular truth.” By setting out my research in a manner that was transparent, in terms of

my research procedures (and in terms of my own authenticity as a teacher-researcher); I felt confident that my final research product would be viewed as rigorous and reliable.

## **Ethical considerations**

L. T. Smith (1999) advised non-Māori researchers (like myself) to consider the Tiaki (mentoring) model when negotiating research partnerships with indigenous communities. This involves a process whereby ‘authoritative Māori people guide and sponsor the researcher’ (p.177). I negotiated my entry into the field, and subsequent interactions with Māori students, under the guidance of my research supervisors and my employer Mr Mike Hollings (CEO of Te Kura/Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kahungunu). All of this was critical to negotiating entry into the field and gaining the trust to participate as informed participants who were willing to discuss their experiences of schooling (past & present) and their aspirations.

In consideration of other ethical concerns, Davidson and Tolich (1999, p. 37) developed five key principles which informed the design of this research project. They are “do no harm; voluntary participation; informed consent; avoidance of deceit and confidentiality or anonymity.” In consideration of potential conflicts of interest, attention was consistently given to my inter-related roles as a teacher and researcher and I sought advice from key stakeholders to identify and manage conflicts of interest. Specific ethical considerations for working cross culturally were also carefully considered and addressed with support from my supervisors. In terms of addressing the risks posed by my Pākehā ethnicity, I can only reiterate the stance of Cram (p. 56-59), who observed that:

It is important to bear in mind Mason Durie’s (1996) exhortation that what is empowering for the community [or whānau] must be decided by that community [or whānau]... In some ways I have avoided the debate about whether or not there is a place for Pākehā researchers within Māori communities. On the other hand, much of what I have discussed may also speak to Māori researchers. One bottom line is that it is up to a community [or whānau] to decide and they must be given the information with which to make an informed choice.

As mentioned previously in this chapter (Chapter Three), much attention was paid to ensuring that student participants could make an informed decision to participate in this study. Each research participant was sent an information letter (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) to seek their informed consent. The student participants were also sent a copy of a

transcript of their interview and invited to sign a verification statement (Appendix G) to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation of their interviews data.

All of this documentation clearly explained the purpose of the research and the steps that would be taken to protect their confidentiality. Each Young Adult Māori student participant was advised in their information sheet (Appendix C) that they held the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. They were also informed that their names would not be used and they would also be asked for written permission to record their interviews (Appendix C). The participants were also advised that any data collected would be stored securely, including electronic data in password protected form. They were further assured that this data would only be viewed by me and my supervisors.

Each participant was advised (in writing and verbally) that the data collected was only be used for the purpose of this research and any journal articles and conference papers related to the research. Therefore, as a teacher of Te Kura students, I needed to be careful to manage this ‘insider’ relationship. To achieve this objective, I acquired the informed consent of the Te Aho Te Kura Pounamu Board of Trustees and of the Southern Regional Manager.

These parties were, in the process, assured that Te Kura’s Health and Safety protocols would be adhered to whenever I was invited to visit the homes of students to conduct interviews. Te Kura teacher/student relationships differ from conventional schooling relationships in that there is less face-to-face contact. I had to spend time developing trust prior to conducting the research and being very conscious of carefully discussing the implications of being involved in the research (i.e. as an ‘insider’) to all potential participants and their whānau.

With further regard to my limitations as a Pākehā teacher-researcher, working in a cross-cultural setting; I drew upon the work of L. T. Smith (1996) and other Kaupapa Māori theorists to guide me. L. T. Smith (1996), in particular, identified some critical questions that I need to carefully consider before engaging with Māori student participants to ensure an ethical process that is consistent with the emancipatory objectives of Kaupapa Māori research. These questions included:

- What research do we want to carry out?
- Who is that research for?
- What difference will it make?

- Who will carry out this research?
- How do we want the research to be done?
- How will we know it is a worthwhile piece of research?
- Who will own the research?
- Who will benefit?’ (L. T. Smith, 1996, pp. 217-218)

To address each of these questions, I gained ethical approval from the UC Ngāi Tahu Advisory Committee with the support of Mr Nigel Harris (University of Canterbury Māori Research Kaiārahi). I was also co-supervised by Professor Angus Macfarlane (Ngāti Whakaue) and Mr Jim Anglem (a Ngāi Tahu academic). Once I received ethical clearance from the Ngāi Tahu Research Advisory Committee, I sought and received support from my colleagues (i.e. fellow teachers). My colleagues invited ‘Young Adult’ Māori students (i.e. students aged over 16 years old), attached to their form classes, to consider participating in this research. As a result of this process, nine students eventually chose to participate and completed consent forms to formalise their involvement (see Appendix D).

Whenever I visited the participants in their homes, I was accompanied by my colleague Ms Jane Brown who had already established trust in her capacity as a (Te Kura) visiting Māori liaison teacher. Jane played a key role in facilitating the brokering of ethical research relationships between myself, the participants and their whānau. Having concluded this discussion of the methodology and ethical considerations, the next chapter (Chapter Four) provides a profile of the student participants before outlining the key research findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will provide a synopsis of the data collected through the semi structured interviews process. The first section of the chapter will provide a concise overview of the participants as a group. This will include a brief demographic profile to outline the group's age range, gender and iwi affiliations. The section that follows then introduces each participant by briefly describing their background and outlining some of the key responses to questions asked during their pre-interview questionnaires and interviews, significant factors that may have influenced their schooling experiences will also be discussed. Finally, this chapter will introduce the key themes that were identified during the analysis of the data.

### **Profile of the participants**

Nine Young Adult Māori students enrolled with Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) were interviewed for the purposes of this study. Each was enrolled in Te Kura and resided in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) and others lived in surrounding townships. Therefore, all the student participants resided within the Waitaha (Canterbury) region. The participants ranged between the ages of 16-19 years old. Seven participants were female students. Two male students were also interviewed. Three of the students (participants Seven, Nine & Six) affiliated themselves with the Ngāi Tahu iwi (tribe/alliance of related hapū) without mentioning any of the particular hapū that constitute that iwi. The remaining students affiliated themselves with North Island (Te Ika a Maui) tribes.

To begin, Participant One identified herself with the Ngāi Te Rangi iwi of the Tauranga Moana area (Western Bay of Plenty region: North Island), without naming any particular hapū. She also had whakapapa (genealogical) links to the broader Tainui (Waikato) waka confederation of iwi, which spreads westward across the landscape from Tauranga Moana in the Bay of Plenty to Kawhia on the West Coast of the North Island. These iwi all trace whakapapa links back to the crew of the ancestral Tainui canoe. However, no hapū were identified by Participant One.

Similarly, Participant Two mentioned whakapapa ties to Ngāti, Pikiao (an iwi of the Te Arawa Confederation of iwi: Bay of Plenty region). She also acknowledged ties to the Tainui waka (ancestral canoe) confederation of iwi. Participant Two did not mention any hapū. Participant Three, in turn, advised me that she had genealogical ties to the Ngāti Whakaue iwi, also of the

Te Arawa confederation. Participant Three also mentioned links to the broader Ngāpuhi iwi of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland). Participant Four, alternatively, did not cite any whakapapa connections for personal reasons, but stated he is interested in learning more about his whakapapa connections when that is possible. Participant Five, alternatively, affiliated himself with Ngāti Raukawa, but did not indicate any specific hapū links or explain whether he held ties to Ngāti Raukawa of the Kapiti Coast area or Waikato area (or both geographical hapū groupings within that iwi). This also linked him to the wider Tainui confederation of iwi.

Participant Six, identified herself solely with the Ngāi Tahu iwi and, in particular, to “Rāpaki marae” (Ngāti Wheki hapū). Hence, she was the sole participant to specifically name a marae or place which was specifically indicative of a hapū of origin. Participant Seven, for her part, also identified herself with the Ngāi Tahu iwi. But she did not mention which hapū. Participant Eight, in turn, identified exclusively with the Te Ātiawa iwi, but she did not specify any hapū links. Moreover, she did not specify whether she affiliated more closely to Te Ātiawa hapū residing in Te Tau Ihu o te Waka a Maui (The prow of the canoe of Maui or ‘top’ of the South Island); Pōneke (i.e. the ‘Port Nicholson Block’/Wellington/Hutt Valley area); the Kapiti Coast area; the Taranaki region or all of these places where Te Ātiawa hapū occupy lands, today.

Participant Nine, alternatively, affiliated herself to the Ngāi Tahu iwi of Te Waipounamu (South Island) and the Te Whānau ā Apanui iwi of the Eastern Bay of Plenty. She also identified herself with “Ngongotaha.” This is a significant mountain closely associated with iwi of the Te Arawa confederation who occupy lands around the Southern shores of Lake Rotorua. Most students (7) held whakapapa ties to North Island iwi, whereas only two (participants Six & Seven) affiliated themselves, exclusively, with the Ngāi Tahu iwi of the South Island. A third participant (Participant Nine) held whakapapa links to Ngāi Tahu but also identified herself with Te Whānau ā Apanui of the Eastern Bay of Plenty (North Island). Consequently, seven of the participants identified to more than one iwi, but only one made any specific mention of a marae (Participant Six). She was also one of the two students who identified themselves exclusively with Ngāi Tahu.

Of the North Island tribal groupings that were mentioned, the Tainui confederation of iwi was identified by four participants (participants One, Two, Four & Five), whereas the Te Arawa Confederation was mentioned by three (participants Two, Three & Nine). Whilst all the students were encouraged to name their hapū affiliations, none did so. This is significant in the sense that the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 between the Crown and hapū because,

traditionally speaking, hapū constituted the primary sociopolitical units of Māori society (Ballara, 1986).

This recurring (historical) pattern of not naming hapū could be the result of a changing society in which iwi, due to the influence of the Crown's Native Land Courts system, and later Treaty settlements (and media coverage) have, in various ways, undermined the status of hapū as the primary political unit (Ballara, 1986). It could also reflect the possibility that the students interviewed did not know the identity of their hapū for a variety of reasons including, possibly, the geographical distance caused by patterns of Māori migration into Christchurch (Barcham, 1998). Having provided an overall profile of the research participants, the following narratives are provided.

## **Participant narratives**

This participants' narratives, below, provide insights into the schooling experiences that led them to enrol with Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura).

### **Participant One.**

Participant One was 16 year old and living in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) when she was interviewed. She affiliates to the Ngai Te Rangi iwi and wider Tainui confederation of iwi. Prior to enrolling in Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu Participant One attended two co-ed secondary schools in Christchurch and also the Southern Regional Health School. Participant One was working towards NCEA Level 1 at a 'face-to-face' school, but due to what she described as 'family issues'; was unable to continue with her studies when she was aged 14 years.

She attended the Southern Health School for a period of time and then joined Te Kura as a Young Adult student at 16 years of age. "Friends" and the "social part of school" were what Participant One liked best about attending school. Her favourite subject was English and she got along well with her English teacher because she could "understand my writing...and made me better at writing."

Participant One loved being in the Te Reo class. She observed: "I don't know what it is, but, when you're around other Māori, it's more chilled out and everything and we get along like family." The one goal that Participant One said she had set for herself at school was, "not to fail" and she added, "that's probably the only goal that I had was, not to fail." Since then, At Te Kura, Participant One had set herself a personal goal of attending a hairdressing or retail

course when she has finished school. These courses were seen as stepping stones to help her get in to other courses later on and they were clearly driven by an economic imperative not too dissimilar to that described elsewhere by Participant Seven:

“Hair dressing and retail ...can sort of help me ... because it’s free... so the other courses I want to do are about five grand [i.e. \$5000.00] ... I can do something with retail and save money and then enrol into the course or something. My dream job is to do makeup.”

Participant One recognised the fact that her whānau do not have the money to support her:

“Five grand is a lot for a year course but we can’t really find the money...my family don’t want me to get out a loan...they’ve done that before and they were in debt and everything.”

Participant One appreciated being in a smaller group of students: “there’s not much students... It’s better because there’s less students and you can get help from the teacher.” She also believed that working with Te Kura as a Young Adult student made her feel more accountable for her learning. She explained that there is, “more responsibility, it’s more your future is on the line if you don’t put your head into it and you don’t do it.” Participant One said she believes hard work and the support of her Te Kura teachers will be the crucial factors for her success in her future educational endeavours.

Through her experiences at Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, Participant One said she had learned more about herself: “It has helped me a lot to see more and like discover more about myself and everything. So, yeah, my goals are more in reach I guess.” Participant One reflected that the recent change in her schooling journey has not been a mainstream route but that, “I just think it’s a different path for me.” Participant One has worked-out an educational pathway, at Te Kura, that will help her avoid incurring debt as this has been a problem for her family in the past.

### **Participant Two.**

Participant Two was a 17 year old female who affiliates to Ngāti Pikiao (Te Arawa confederation) and the Tainui confederation of iwi. She attended two state co-ed secondary schools prior to enrolling in Te Kura. One secondary school was in Ōtautahi and the other in the wider Canterbury Region. Participant Two described her early teenage years as, “my bad



past life.” She preferred to hang out with her friends at the park than go to school: “I wasn’t really bothered with going to school I would more likely go bunk at the park or something.” Participant Two said she didn’t set academic goals while at school, “because I wouldn’t achieve them.” Participant Two left school at the age of 14 years. She explained that, “To me, it was too hard, you know. There were so many classes so I looked for the easy way out really ...go for the alcohol and friends.”

Participant Two had significant family responsibilities and looking after her nieces and nephews made her tired and she believed this impacted on her learning. “Well I didn’t get enough sleep because they were quite young...not having enough energy, not wanting to go and do anything just lack of energy really.” Because Participant Two had missed a lot of school she found it became more and more difficult to catch up on what she had missed. This was most evident when she recalled that “I couldn’t really catch up ... didn’t catch up at all...I didn’t really want to be there.”

The best times at school, as far as Participant Two was concerned, involved the social aspects of hanging out with friends at interval and lunchtime. Her friendships were vital and this was made most clear when she shared that, “I lived more for my friends really.” Te Reo Māori was Participant Two’s favourite subject at school. She described this class as having a different kind of “vibe” to her other classes. She added that, “...it wasn’t like a boring classroom. It was more like family.” The Te Reo Māori teacher was her favourite teacher. Participant Two, tellingly, shared a sense of whanaungatanga when she described why she felt “connected” with her teacher through family ties:

She knew our family...she pretty much knew how to interact with me. It was more like an Auntie kind of vibe rather than a teacher. She knew how to talk to me really, how to whip me into shape.

Participant Two appreciated the personal attention she got from her Te Reo Māori teacher. This particular teacher set her some clear goals for attendance and arranged shared lunches as reward for meeting these attendance goals. This attention was important according to Participant Two, because it showed “care.” She elaborated that, “It shows a lot of care ...I mean if she’s willing to give me something just for me to go to [her] class.” Though Te Reo Māori was not something Participant Two is studying at the time of her interview, she indicated that it is something she wants to study in the future.

Being involved with her former school's kapa haka (Māori performing arts group) was also enjoyed by Participant Two. She explained that, "We'd always been to kapa haka, me and my sisters." Through kapa haka, Participant Two's Te Reo teacher had spent a lot of time with her siblings. Although other teachers in the school also knew Participant Two's siblings, the "connection" made through kapa haka was seen Participant Two as a somewhat unique relationship. She recalled that, "They (other teachers) knew my sisters...but not in the way that she [her Te Reo Māori] knew them...she spent a lot of time with my sisters...we know each other better."

Participant Two found being in her other classes more challenging. She described her experience in class as being "shadowed out." This was because of the large number of students in the classes she experienced. Participant Two emphasised that, "...there's so many students that you feel really small ... I was always shadowed out." Participant Two also felt that teachers' expectations of her sometimes "shadowed her out." In her eyes Participant Two felt that if you were in a lower streamed class, or considered a "naughty kid", the academic expectations from these teachers were much lower. As a result, Participant Two indicated that she responded negatively to some of her teachers' alleged deficit-theorising:

I didn't do much work I would always laugh or be the class clown...they said you will be a bus driver you know when you are older ...I am not going to amount to anything really which is quite harsh and of course I won't do anything if you're going to say that.

Participant Two believed that these teachers had too many other people to worry about and were more-focussed on meeting the needs of other students they considered to have greater academic potential. She subsequently concluded that, "Well, if there's better people than you, then obviously, they're going to want to make them, you know; higher." Participant Two thus concluded that having a good relationship with teachers is important to students achieving academic success. She identified teachers possessing a "sense of humour" as being an important attribute to effective teaching saying that, "Like with our [Te Kura] learning advisor she's quite bubbly and funny and she knows how to interact with us." Therefore, having the "support" of her teachers at Te Kura was very important to Participant Two and she underlined this when she shared the importance of: "Just knowing I have someone to, you know, fall back on for help if I'm struggling."

In Participant Two's experience, students benefit from working at their own pace and she is now able to do this. She claimed that, at Te Kura, "they [teachers] know how to put in place

something and ensure that the student will do it even though they take their time they're still going to do it. It's at their own pace." She added that working in smaller groups also helps her achieve her academic goals when she said: "It's helped a lot. I mean just having a handful of students and a learning advisor or two it's way easier." Many students struggled with family issues, according to Participant Two. She explained that:

"It's so common to have family problems that interfere with schooling really... and sometimes they [teachers] can't really interfere in that kind of area but I guess they (teachers) cannot be so negative about their [student] learning...and look more into it instead of just labelling them."

Participant Two added that, "labelling has been my life, really." She alleged that she had been told by some of her teachers that, "You're not going to amount to nothing." Participant Two, however, emphasised to me that she had now set herself some clear goals for the future. She said, "I have a plan in place so I know where I'm going." For Participant Two this even means that she is prepared to work on subjects that she may not enjoy. For example, she said, "I don't like English but I'm going to have to do it."

Her career goal is now her motivation for future success. Overall, Participant Two described her recent educational experiences at Te Kura, positively. She said that being at Te Kura has really, "opened me up." In her experience secondary school felt too big. She added that, "I was more of a class clown to be noticed really, I wasn't me, I was just someone that people could laugh at really." Today, she would rather be noticed for being, "smart" and being "kind." Participant Two said she is now much clearer about her academic goals and her personal strengths: "I'm quite determined, that's my main strength and I'm quite curious, I always wonder what if, yeah." To conclude, she also articulated that she is enjoying being part of a learning group at Te Kura, which was evident in many of her comments – typified by these following remarks: "I'm good here. I am not invisible!"

### **Participant Three.**

Participant Three was an 18 year old at the time of her interview. She affiliates to Ngāti Whakaue iwi of the Te Arawa confederation and to the Ngāpuhi of Te Tai Tokerau. Prior to enrolling in Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu she attended a private alternative school and then a state co-ed secondary school in Ōtautahi. Participant Three attended a state secondary school before making the decision to enrol with Te Kura for Year 13. She explained that:

In Year 12 I realised that I didn't like sitting in class and having someone talking at me...I hadn't taken anything in...so when I heard I could go to Te Kura and control own learning it is a lot more me I think.

The flexibility of learning online with suited Participant Three. She explained that, "I like how all the books are online so I can just go online and do it, little links that they have to Youtube videos...not all being reading." Participant Three's desire to learn Te Reo Māori was also a reason for her leaving her former (face-to-face) school. School policy was that she was not allowed to take Te Reo Māori in Year 11 because she had not studied Te Reo previously.

The Te Reo Māori teacher had offered to give Participant Three the support to achieve the internally assessed Te Reo standards, but the Head of Year 11 at her former school did not allow this to happen because she would not be able to sit the external examinations. Participant Three described this situation as "a wee bit annoying". Leaving face-to-face school gave Participant Three the time to find another Te Reo Māori class run during the evenings where she could pursue this interest. "I learn (Te Reo ) through 'Rising Homes'...they have a little class ... on Wednesday nights."

The social aspect of school was something Participant Three enjoyed along with the challenge of learning. She also had good relationships with her teachers, especially her history teacher who had a good sense of humour. She said, "He was very personable and treated students quite like friends rather than just students and I haven't found that a lot with some of my teachers." Participant Three set personal goals while at her previous (face-to-face) school and decided to focus on science subjects as they were her passion. When she started doing well in these subjects she described pushing through to go in to the top class in Year 12. When she achieved her goal of getting into the top-streamed class, she said she realised, "I could do anything I wanted."

The previous (face-to-face) school Participant Three attended, had streamed its students into classes based on perceived ability levels. She described herself as initially positioned in the "lower classes." However, with the benefit of hindsight, she considered being in these "lower classes" as an advantage in some ways because she believed she got a lot of support from her teachers and because the curriculum was delivered at a slower pace. Nevertheless, in Year 11 when Participant Three discussed with the careers teacher her desire to be a doctor, she was told that it just wasn't possible because she was in the lower streamed classes. Participant Three

recalled that, “She [the Careers Teacher] said it just wasn’t possible, I was never going to make it because I wasn’t in the higher [streamed] classes.”

Participant Three believed the careers advisor wanted her to consider a “backup plan” because she thought she was going to fail. She explained:

I think she was telling me to look at other options so that I had a back-up plan when she thought I was going to fail. That’s kind of how it is seen at [name withheld] High School, if you are in 103 you’re just someone who’s not intelligent I guess.

Participant Three used this experience to motivate herself to achieve her goal of studying medicine. “I found it quite motivating that she said I couldn’t do it because I knew I could.”

The support Participant Three received from her whānau and friends and teachers was vital to Participant Three. She said, “If they didn’t support me I wouldn’t feel motivated to do anything that I wanted to I guess.” Participant Three was grateful that her family could help her financially with her future study plans. She had very clear goals for her future and this was particularly evident when she advised me that, ‘I’ve applied for health sciences and accommodation down in Dunedin. I feel very on track.’ Through her experiences in various educational experiences, Participant Three stressed that, “I can do anything I put my mind to.”

#### **Participant Four.**

Participant Four was 18 years old at the time of this interview and was accompanied by his mother. She advised me, at the end of his interview, that it was extremely interesting and moving to hear her son’s narrative. Therefore, this interview appeared to reflect a cathartic exercise for both mother and son. Participant Four did not cite any iwi affiliations for personal reasons but stressed that he would like to learn more about his whakapapa in the future. Prior to his enrolment in Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu he attended a co-ed state secondary school in South Canterbury. Participant Four left school after experiencing bullying at secondary school. He came to Te Kura because he said he wanted, “to experience my education without feeling intimidated.”

Participant Four’s experiences of bullying were prolonged and developed from psychological bullying into physical bullying. This was most evident when he said, “I used to go home really sore and ....stay in my room a lot.” While Participant Four’s whānau and the school

management were eventually alerted to the situation, and the bullies got a bit of a “rark-up”, the situation got worse for him because he was now considered a “nark.”

Participant Four felt this “nark” status made the bullies even more aggressive toward him. He recalled that he didn’t feel self-assured enough to stay at school as a result of the continued violence, “I just didn’t feel confident about the path if I continued to take it [the emotional & physical violence inflicted upon him] I just didn’t think I would be a ... happy person.” He went on to say that, “I was really scared. I was extremely scared.” Participant Four was 14 years old when he left school. He believed that, “if it wasn’t for that [the relentless bullying] I think I would definitely still be there today.”

Participant Four’s earlier experiences of schooling were much more positive. He enjoyed primary school and being involved in a variety of activities stating that, “I miss a lot of things like the athletic days and the days where ... the students were all brought together and kind of buoyed each other up and kind of supported each other.” He recalled forming “close” relationships with his teachers at primary school. For example, he mentioned the dispositions of one teacher who he recalled fondly, explaining that, “She ... just loved kids ... she would get really involved with us and it just made us feel special ... she was like another parent.”

Participant Four, not surprisingly, recalled that his transition from primary school to secondary school was challenging. “I think the main thing ...I noticed, transitioning from school to school, is that as you grow older the involvement of the parents really started to fall apart because at primary school ... the whole family actually was involved.” He claimed that getting to know a variety of secondary school teachers, on the other hand, was “very tough” and being “split apart” from a group of people that “were moulded well together”, as they were previously at his Primary School, to be also “difficult.”

Participant Four felt very buoyant about his academic potential when he entered secondary school. He said, “I definitely was confident with my academic stuff ... and I felt like I was doing well ... I was just enthusiastic about all the subjects I was doing.” His relationships with teachers and experiences of pedagogy in the classroom varied from one teacher-to-another as he moved from classroom-to-classroom. This was a source of anxiety for him and his Year 9 peers. He recalled, “I remember a lot of the class was ... scared to ask questions sometimes and once it came to ...worksheets ... you know we’d get in trouble for not listening well enough.”

In contrast, he also recalled some very positive classroom experiences. “I had a really great maths teacher... and if we weren’t sure about anything we would ... stay behind after class.” Participant Four added, “I looked forward to that class every period ... I felt really comfortable asking any question.” Once out of face to face school, Participant Four stated that he missed the “social aspect of learning” and having the support of other students. He also emphasised that he missed positive interactions with teachers. This was most notable when he emphasised his appreciation for, “the whole visual aspect of learning and having a physical being there to teach you and answer any question that might come to your brain.... I like the [positive] relationships you build with your teachers.”

Of further interest, Participant Four claimed that he sometimes felt “rushed” through subjects while he attended a “face-to-face school”, whereas he said he now feels like he has more time (at Te Kura) to process his thoughts. This was most evident when he described how, “it felt like it [teaching] was a bit rushed back then and I feel like now just having a bit more time sometimes really helps you kind of get the whole concept.” While at primary school, Participant Four was involved with kapa haka (a Māori performing arts group). He enjoyed performing and loved the group dynamic, but he felt that his primary school:

didn’t really get into the culture ... and explain what the meaning of all these actions and words were saying...so I personally felt like I was just a bit of an act on stage and kind of just larking around.

This learning experience discouraged him from getting further involved in kapa haka performances at secondary school. In terms of learning Te Reo Māori, Participant Four also remembered a dedicated month of Te Reo Māori in Year 9 where a few stories were learned. He described this approach as being focused exclusively on “surface level” content – much to his disappointment:

It was, I guess, the surface of everything ... Year 10 would have been the year that I ... would have got more involved with that...I’m a little bit disappointed ...that we definitely missed out on that.

While Participant Four’s schooling experiences were “challenging” at times, he still displayed resilience when reflecting upon these events. He framed his experiences in a very positive way:

Yeah, it was extremely tough.... But I guess it's you know made me who I am today and you know I don't regret anything...the experiences I've gained over the last few years ... they've been some of the best things and some of the worst things of my life.

Participant Four also displayed self-belief and this was evident when he advised this writer how he has mapped out a pathway for his future. He said, amongst other things, that, "I'd really love to be a sports doctor ... get enrolled in university in maybe five to six years...it's something I am not rushing into." Participant Four was also clear that all students need to be passionate about what they are studying and this is something that learning from home, via Te Kura, has allowed him to do. He recalled that, "I was able to work out what it is I enjoy and what my personal strengths are and what I like about myself."

Participant Four was also adamant that having support from people around him is the key to his confidence. This was particularly evident when he revealed that, "You know I was always doubted. You know...like back at school and even outside of school...and sometimes it sets you back really big." Participant Four now uses these experiences as a motivational tool to keep himself feeling "well." He advised that, "It's just a really big motivation for me ... I get into like the spirit where I just work so hard and just show them ...I can do it." One of the lessons Participant Four has gained from his schooling experiences is that every student is unique and has different learning needs. He stressed this most clearly when he concluded that, "Like, I think that it is really important for each student to be able to have a uniqueness you know of how they learn and how you express things."

### **Participant Five.**

Participant five was a 19 years old at the time of his interview and was also accompanied by his mother, who, like Participant Four's mother; also advised me that she had found observing the interview to be an affirming experience for both herself and her son.

Participant attended two area schools in the Canterbury region prior to enrolling with Te Kura. He affiliates to the Ngāti Raukawa iwi. Participant Five was 15 years old when he left school. Like Participant Four, he became a target for bullies. This became evident when Participant Five stated, "they [firstly] managed to run another kid out of school and then well because he was gone, I was the next weakest link. Yeah...so then I ended up leaving school." Participant Five was adamant that, despite his whānau's efforts, the school did little to support him in dealing with the bullying. He said, "we explored every avenue we could ... I approached the



guidance counsellor at school who just told me I must be doing something to aggravate the situation.” Participant Five rejected this advice and argued that:

you don’t have to aggravate a situation to have someone bully you ... I continued trying my hardest just to ignore them and go to school...I used to spend my lunchtimes in the library which I soon got sick of. So, I used to go home.

Participant Five was eventually visited by a truancy officer who he felt was supportive. He recalled that the truancy officer went to the school to “battle for me.” Participant Five’s mother later had a meeting with the principal, but the end result was that the whānau felt Participant Five’s situation was not being taken seriously enough. He said the principal’s response seemed, “to shrug it off like it’s nothing ... it’s not...acceptable...so I ended up leaving school.” Before leaving school, Participant Five had to go around the school to get various pieces of leaving documentation “signed-off” by his various subject teachers. This was a process that Participant Five found extremely difficult. He said, “I left school, but I ... had to enter the school again, sadly, to get the teachers to sign off for me to leave.”

Initially, Participant Five had enjoyed the social aspect of schooling. “It was just being part of a group, being around other people, talking and communicating” however, he also felt that fitting into the group took a bit of effort:

I often tried fitting in too much and I guess that didn’t help because I was trying to be someone else... like trying to play rugby and all that stuff ... I didn’t know who I was, I didn’t know what I wanted to be and where I wanted to be.

Participant Five believed fitting in with the other students at school was difficult because the school had fostered a culture that he described as a bit, “territorial.” He explained that, “the boarder boys had been together at school right through from primary ... I had only been there a term ...they thought they had to be a leader and run the school.” Participant Five added that he enjoyed sports and music when he was at secondary school but didn’t carry on with kapa haka once he got to secondary school:

I didn’t feel the urge to explore my cultural history further at the time...I think it was ... well when you go into a new school and starting out it can be quite daunting and you’re just trying to settle into a routine.

It was interesting to observe that Te Reo Māori classes were a compulsory subject at Participant Five's former (face-to-face) secondary school and he enjoyed studying Te Reo Māori. This was clearly important to Participant Five who claimed: "It gave students who are Māori, part Māori an opportunity to explore ...Te Reo is part of who I am...a subject I enjoyed more than others because it something that was part of me." As Participant Five looked back on his educational experiences, he said he believed he didn't always have the confidence in his ability that he should have. He added that, "I think I kind of under estimated my intelligence in a way at face-to-face school."

However, Participant Five believed that enrolling at Te Kura has helped him to be more responsible for his own learning. He explained that, "You don't rely on others...you're in charge of what you do." Participant Five added that he enjoyed the flexibility of Te Kura learning but is also aware that he often gets distracted without the supervision of a teacher and confessed that, "I get distracted, forget about school work", without a teacher who is physically present to prompt him. In terms of an educational aspiration, it is Participant Five's goal to study Law.

He said, "I want to get university entrance." He also emphasised that he needs to "knuckle down" and work hard to ensure he gets the best possible marks. Having a good support system of whānau and friends is, therefore, quite important to Participant Five. This was most evident when he reasoned that, "Well they just help me and keep me going, give encouragement." Participant Five accordingly advised that he appreciated having Te Kura face-to-face tutorials available to him as he still finds that interacting with a group of peers really helps him. He said, "I can't handle being behind a computer for long periods...I can't sit somewhere for too long." Participant Five was philosophical about his educational experiences so far and proposed that:

"I think as you get older...every experience you have...gives you a new perspective on life and you can either accept it and move forward and work harder to be what you want to be."

### **Participant Six.**

Participant Six was 16 year old when she was interviewed. She affiliated herself to Ngāi Tahu and, more specifically, to Rāpaki marae. Participant Six attended state primary schools in Christchurch and spent 9 months at a New South Wales secondary school prior to enrolling with Te Kura. Participant Six refused to go to school after a bullying incident at Intermediate

School. She said: “I thought why should I be there if I actually can’t concentrate on my learning and its more about worrying about what people think or getting bullied...so I pretty much stopped going.” Despite a meeting between the whānau and the school management the issue was never resolved successfully. Participant Six believed that the whānau was not dealt with fairly in the process.

The injustice of the incident clearly still rankled her and this was most evident when she recalled that: “They have money, their parents are probably quite successful, how could they think, you know, their little daughter or their little son could do such things ... my mum and nana (grandmother) were angry.” It was after this incident that Participant Six stopped attending face-to-face school on a regular basis.

Participant Six was 12 or 13 years old when she decided she stopped going to school. She explained, “I was like shutting down, I didn’t want to go to school anymore, not any school.” While at Intermediate school, Participant Six formed a good rapport with several teachers. One teacher in particular stood out in her memory because, “He didn’t come across as a, you know, ‘normal’ teacher ... he approached schooling in a different way...it was more like trying to make it a fun way of learning.” The support of teachers was, notably, an important factor according to Participant Six. But Participant Six also believed that only some teachers are, “like, actually, there to want you to get an education and they focus on that and they’re not worried about the ...money...they actually do care.” This type of teacher, Participant Six believed; are more involved and, “help you ...and just do their jobs a lot better.”

Participant Six performed in the kapa haka group (traditional Māori performing arts group) while she was at primary school but there was no kapa haka at intermediate. Additionally, Participant Six said she was not part of that school’s bilingual unit because although her mother’s family is Māori, “...my mum she doesn’t know much about the Māori side of it” she goes on to say, “I didn’t speak Te Reo Māori.” Participant Six’s Māori identity also led to what Participant Six calls “silly comments being made about me.” especially when she was attending an Australian High school. She said, “I think they were quite intimidated by me and, in a way, scared...I don’t know, just the way I look, maybe, is different.” Her experience at the Australian high School lasted only 9 months.

It was, therefore, important to Participant Six that all students are offered opportunities at school to learn about their culture. This stance was most evident when she said that:

I would suggest ... offering students opportunities to learn more about their culture whether it is Māori or anything really... it would be nice for other people to understand more about ...our culture or their culture.

Having strong support networks was important to Participant Six, just as it was to other participants. This came through strongly in her interview when she said:

I can try to say, you know, “I can do it!” But, having others around you, who see that you could probably do it, too! And then telling me that. Like ... my mum, you know my family, support from good friends *is* important!

In terms of the future, Participant Six advised that she was very motivated to gain the qualifications required to go to university. She saw her educational experiences as largely “positive”, stating that, “you can look at it (educational experiences) as a positive or negative. But, I mean, for me personally, it’s been like a positive.” Participant Six concluded her interview by reiterating her belief that her reasons for being out of school were not related to her not wanting an education. She emphasised that “I definitely wanted an education.”

### **Participant Seven.**

Participant Seven was 18 years old when she was interviewed. She also affiliated herself exclusively to the Ngāi Tahu iwi but, unlike Participant Six, gave no obvious clues to her hapū affiliations. Prior to enrolling in Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu Participant Seven was enrolled in a state co-educational secondary school in Christchurch.

Participant Seven experienced health issues throughout secondary school which eventually led her to leave her former secondary school and enrol with Te Kura. Participant Seven joked that, previously, her favourite part of the school day was lunchtime – when she didn’t have to do any school work. She also recalled her favourite teacher as being good at demonstrating what she was teaching, stating that, “she was interactive ... she was also my netball coach as well!” Participant Seven also recalled her favourite maths teacher because he gave the class examples of what they were supposed to do and time to practice what they were learning. Participant Seven found school deadlines for work challenging within classroom settings. She explained: “It was hard to get stuff done on time ... I actually had to think of what to do for half that time.”

This made Participant Seven feel under pressure in her classes. In what was supposed to be her Year 11 year, Participant Seven was held back in Year 10. She explained that, "...they put me back to year 10 because they didn't think I'd be able to do Year 11 work ... so, I ended up taking time off." When she was 16 years old, the school phoned her mother and advised her that Participant Seven had so much time off school that she might as well leave. Participant Seven was not unhappy to leave school because, "they didn't pick up the learning struggles that I had...they noticed I'm not getting this done, but they didn't actually pick it up."

At the time of this interview, Te Kura, Participant Seven was studying a split-level course which enabled her to combine a mix of Level 1 and Level 2 courses and she explained that she liked being able to choose whether she does external or internal assessments. She further explained that, "In [name of school withheld] you have to do externals....I think I would be ...scared and nervous because I don't think I'd be able to get things done in ... two hours or whatever." Participant Seven didn't get involved in kapa haka or Te Reo Māori classes at school. She said, "I was thinking of doing that, but I wasn't comfortable with them ... so it was more the popular types ... and I just wasn't comfortable."

Participant Seven described herself as being a "shy" person saying that, "I just don't like actually talking to people." A classroom of thirty students was a difficult environment for communication and she advised that at her previous schools she was overwhelmed by the fact that, "there's like 30 students in the classroom, one teacher you only get about like a minute or 5 minutes with the teacher each hour. So it was harder for me to get help." She also added that discussing her learning issues was uncomfortable because, "everyone can over-hear what you are talking about." Participant Seven said she finds talking to Te Kura teachers much easier because it is, "one-to-one and no one can over hear what you are discussing."

The flexibility of Te Kura programmes has consequently helped Participant Seven deal with her health problems because she could work from home. She also explained that she has also enjoyed developing her independence and confidence by completing practical courses such as retail. She added that:

it's helping me to get the confidence to actually talk to someone ... What I hope to achieve is that I can get things done, can get the independence stuff...and also get the self- confidence."

Having the support of her whānau was also very important to Participant Seven. She advised that the things that help her to “do well” are, “Mum pushing me along to get things done ... And Dad looking down at me from heaven.” Participant Seven also displayed awareness of equity issues emerging from wider societal structures. She made it clear that she believed that enhanced government funding for students like her to engage in courses is needed to help her and other students to pursue their educational aspirations, “so they [students] don’t end up having a whole lot of debt.”

### **Participant Eight.**

Participant Eight was 18 years old when she was interviewed. She affiliated to Te Ātiawa confederation of iwi who occupy lands in the Bay of Plenty region of the North Island. Prior to enrolling with Te Kura, she was enrolled in two co-educational state secondary schools in Christchurch. Relationships with friends at school were the “best” and “worst” parts of Participant Eight’s educational experience of face-to-face schooling. She enjoyed being with her friends, but when her friendships started to “drift” school life became difficult. She recalled how: “Girls being girls, it was torture for me. I hated high school.” Despite the school’s attempt at counselling, to resolve Participant Eight’s “situation”, she felt that the teachers were “not” on her side. This eventually led her to leave school and get a job. As a result, she believed that an unsupportive school culture had significantly impacted upon her. She explained: “I can tell you now that I’d still be in school if it wasn’t for bullying. I suffer from depression as well ... it was bad when I was bullied.”

Participant Eight also recalled some very supportive teachers when she was at school. She described her favourite teacher as being: “funny and cool, you know; who let us be who we wanted to be in that class.” Participant Eight, however, still ended-up spending most lunchtimes and morning teas in the art class, alone, “because that was obviously like having no friends so that’s where I spent most of my time.” This breakdown in her friendship group alienated her from her peers and wider school life. As a result, Participant Eight eventually tried another face-to-face school but the learning environment did not suit her.

She said, “I didn’t even last the whole term.....they have two hour classes...you were allowed to leave school grounds, so you could go and do whatever and not come back...and they didn’t even notice.” When Participant Eight went back to her original face-to-face school the cycle of bullying started again and she left school for the second time at the age of 16 years, Participant

Eight learned some Te Reo Māori while at school but was not involved in kapa haka due to her wider feelings of alienation from school and her own internal senses of ethnic identity. She explained that:

“I am a shy person, I don’t like singing and talking in front of big groups ... and it’s hard, like being a white Māori sometimes because people look at you and like oh you’re not Māori...you’re just a wanna be Māori ...because ...I’m a ‘half caste’ Māori. I don’t always put myself out there as a Māori girl.”

Participant Eight, believed that the encouragement of family, is really important to her future academic success. She explained that, “I was ready to give up last week on schooling altogether and my aunty said no. No you’re not, you’ve got a bright future ahead of you, you’ve got the brain.” She advised me that her Te Kura teachers are also important to her because the Te Kura “teachers are qualified in that subject” and added that, “ if I ask my aunty she just says, oh that’s not how we were taught when we were at school!” Participant Eight also shared her belief that secondary school teachers need to be understanding of some of the stresses and strains on students:

You know they get under a lot of pressure from parents friends and sports and stuff like that and sometimes it would be cool if teachers could just step back instead of pressuring them and ask them if they’re alright...when I was at face-to-face ... they didn’t know what I was going through.

Having the flexibility of learning with Te Kura has enabled Participant Eight to keep studying while looking after her young baby. She said, “I want to do it for my son as well, you know to show him that I wasn’t a complete drop out and you know to teach him stuff and make him do high school and get all his levels.” Therefore, having a young son has made Participant Eight more determined than ever to achieve her academic goals. She proclaimed that, “I am focused on what I like to achieve and determined to do it. You know hard working, got to be hard working.”

### **Participant Nine.**

Participant Nine was 17 years old when she was interviewed. She affiliates to Te Whānau Apanui, Ngāi Tahu and the people of “Ngongotaha” who inhabit the Te Arawa rohe (tribal territory) on the Southern shores of Lake Rotorua. Participant Nine was studying to be a

Hairdresser at a Trades Academy and enrolled with Te Kura after she found it hard to juggle her school commitments with her Trades Academy commitments. She felt that, “the teachers didn’t really help me as often as they could ...because I was at a course and I was behind in my work and all the students were ahead of me.”

Participant Nine also felt that it was hard for the teachers to support her as there was an expectation that the students going to university were the priority. She said, “They’d just help the people that wanted to go to Uni.” As a result, she enrolled with Te Kura because she was spending a lot of time away from school. Participant Nine claimed, “I was doing all my work at home and I wasn’t learning at school, didn’t really see the point in wasting like my time, or wasting my teacher’s time.” While at school, Participant Nine enjoyed being with her friends. She also had positive relationships with her teachers. For example, Participant Nine spoke emotionally about one of her teachers when she explained how that teacher displayed a genuine interest in her wellbeing, saying that, “She helped me throughout my school years; all my school years ... she’d see if something was wrong.”

However, Participant Nine wasn’t able to see this teacher so much in her senior years as the teacher had responsibilities for the junior school and there was not as much interaction. This recollection resulted in tears from Participant Nine. Participant Nine spoke also of her dance teacher who was also helpful and said she would, “push me if I needed pushing.” Participant Nine was involved in kapa haka and the inter schools ‘Polyfest’ but did not persevere with kapa haka through high school, explaining that, “I loved kapa haka, but I just didn’t think it was for me... I can’t sing...I’m not really good at singing.” Participant Nine took Te Reo Māori in Year 9 because it was compulsory.

She said, “I found it a bit hard just because my family, they’re not really ... they don’t speak it often....my mum really wanted me to take it, but I flipped out.” Participant Nine also decided she didn’t want to take Te Reo because it clashed with the other study options that she wanted to undertake due to that school’s rigid timetabling arrangements. Since enrolling in Te Kura, Participant Nine decided to study Te Reo Māori. She said, “I want to learn, I want to at least have the basics ... so I just thought I’d pick Māori just to get the basics.”

Participant Nine believes that studying with Te Kura has meant that she has to be more independent and manage her time and herself more carefully. Being organised, and having confidence in herself, she believes – are the keys to future success in her studies. She also believes that having the support of friends and teachers are important for students. Participant



Nine's advice to other students was to, "Just kind of follow what you want to, lead yourself...don't follow anyone else, just lead yourself."

### **Conclusion: Recurring themes that emerged from the narratives data**

While none of the participants interviewed in these narratives attended the same schools in the greater Ōtautahi area, many of their reflections recalled similar experiences of schooling. All the participants were quick to commend supportive teachers and recounted many positive aspects of their schooling experiences. There were, however, many instances in which they each recalled schooling experiences that were less than ideal. Although several of the participants had been out of face-to-face school settings for a couple of years, each of their narratives clearly identified key events that were pivotal to their alienation from 'main stream' secondary schools.

The schooling environment was described in many of the participants' narratives as being the place where participants felt like the "outsider" constantly battling to feel a sense of "belonging" and "acceptance"; whilst simultaneously developing their own senses of ethnic and cultural identity. Of further significance, most of the participants in this study were (officially considered) 'alienated' from so-called 'mainstream' schooling before they completed Level 1 NCEA qualifications. Several referred to the difficulty they experienced transitioning from their primary school environs to a secondary school environment. Looking back on schooling experiences revealed, for some participants, their experiences of pain and loss.

Most of the participants' narratives conveyed a deep sense of frustration, anger and regret around events they had experienced. Each of the participants however, revealed a sense of determination and direction when looking at the future. Several participants could reflect on how their educational goals had developed and broadened since leaving their previous (face-to-face) schools. Participant Five for example, reflected that he had developed greater confidence in his own abilities since leaving his previous school. He stressed that, "I kind of under estimated my intelligence in a way at face-to-face school because there was always people in my class who I thought were smarter than me; but thinking, now, that we're really no different." Similarly, Participant One stated that she had only ever set one goal when she started Year 9 and that was simply, "not to fail." In contrast she has now set herself future career goals that involve tertiary training.

Participant Two also stated she didn't bother setting goals when she was at face-to-face school because she knew she wouldn't achieve them, however she now describes herself as "determined", "curious" and "smart"; which contrasts with the early part of her secondary school years where she said she found the classes "too hard." In her own words, she had previously opted to take "the easy way out" by only "going [to school] for the alcohol and friends." Therefore, her current descriptions of her sense of "self" contrasted strongly with the labels she felt were "pinned" on her by teachers and peers at her former face-to-face secondary school. Her increased confidence was most evident when she stated, "I don't feel so small."

Participant Four described himself as feeling much more confident in his own ability: "Yes I feel confident in my ability...I feel very capable, feel very capable." In the same way, Participant Five said she feels that "even though I was in a low class in year 11, when I started doing well ... I realised I can do anything that I want to put my mind to." Participant Five went on to say that she now feels "on track" with her plans for the future.

Participant Eight advised that she is now more motivated because she wants to be a good role model for her young son. She explained, "I want to do it for X...to teach him stuff and yeh, make him do high school, get all his levels." There was also a sense that the participants felt they had to 'battle' against various forces to achieve educational success. Participant Three, for example, described the challenge of moving into top streamed classes as, "I pushed to go into the top class in Year 12 ... I did get into them in the end and that is when I realised I could do anything I wanted to do."

Participant Five described the pressure of trying to fit in at school "when you have the pressure of these situations it can sometimes affect your confidence and your self-esteem." Likewise, Participant Four stressed that, "I used to have the feeling that people used to doubt me .... and this sometimes sets you back really big." However, he also stressed that now he uses this as a motivational tool. "It's just really motivating for me ...I get into like the spirit where I just work so hard and just show them ... I can do it." Participant Eight was adamant that her educational achievement is very important to her. "I can tell you now that I'd still be in school if it wasn't for bullying...I would have stayed in school ...but, I suffer from depression as well so that doesn't help."

Despite the challenges faced by the participants all expressed a confidence in themselves and for the future. analysis/argument. Participant Four advised this writer that, "yeah it was pretty hard...I guess it's made me who I am today and you know I don't regret anything." He was

also able to distance himself from the bullying behaviour he received when he stated, “there’s nothing weak about you it’s the weak things about them (the bullies) and I think a lot of it is jealousy and things like that.”

Participant Five echoed these sentiments when he reflected on the bullying he also experienced at school. He said, “every experience you have.. kind of gives you a new perspective on life and you can either accept it and move forward and work hard to be what you want to be or ... not really settle. The participants in this study used the words, such as ‘self-management’, ‘being organised’, ‘having confidence in myself’, ‘knuckling down’ and ‘working hard’, ‘taking risks’, when they discussed what they needed to do to reach the academic goals they had set for themselves. These words reflect the participants’ belief in their own agency and control over their education success.

The years of compulsory schooling have a significant impact on all young people and the narratives of the nine Young Adult Māori students, who participated in this study, reveal that they are fully aware of the impact that their schooling experiences have had upon them. The participants consistently described how their experiences of face-to-face schooling on shaping who they are today. They were able to articulate an acute understanding of the issues and challenges they met in each of their face-to-face school (i.e. *mesosystem*) settings.

While it has been widely documented that positive relationships and a sense of belonging are important to laying a foundation for a successful education, it appears that there are many forces at work within the lives of these young people, and within the school environments they encountered, that undermined their ability to stay engaged in the traditional (face-to-face) schooling system. It is worth noting A. H. Macfarlane et al., (2007) described schools as complex and dynamic organisations that are a microcosm of our society.

The recurring themes that emerged from the narratives of each of these ‘alienated’ young Māori students may give us some important insights into not only our local (Ōtautahi/Waitaha) schooling system; but into some of the strengths, stresses and strains of contemporary New Zealand society. The following (three) dominant themes emerged from the interviews:

1. Relationships
2. Pedagogy
3. Learner identity

These three themes will now provide the framework for the data analysis discussion which is presented in the following chapter (Chapter Five).

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter analyses the recurring (key) themes that emerged from the findings described in Chapter Four. To reiterate, the key themes to be discussed here are: (i) relationships; (ii) pedagogy and; (iii) learner identity. The first of the three key themes discussed will be the significance of ‘relationships.’ A set of three ‘relationships’ sub-themes will then be outlined to provide a structured critical analysis of the types of relationships that were of foremost concern to the participants. These sub themes include: (i) ‘peer relationships’, (ii) ‘relationships between teachers and students’ and, (iii) ‘whānau support & ‘whānau/school relationships’. Next, attention will be given to the second key theme of ‘pedagogy.’ This discussion of ‘pedagogy’ will also necessitate consideration of a set of relevant sub themes. The key pedagogical sub-themes to be discussed here will include: ‘teacher centred vs. student centred pedagogies’, the ‘hidden curriculum’, and ‘institutional constraints’. Finally, a discussion of the last key theme of ‘learner identity’ occur which highlights the participants’ ‘re-storying’ of their learner identities since growing older and leaving their former face-to-face schooling environs.

### **Relationships**

As stated above, three sub-themes emerged from the data collected in relation to the key theme of ‘relationships’. They included: ‘peer relationships’, ‘relationships between teachers and students’ and ‘school and whānau relationships’. Each of these sub themes will now be discussed in relation to literature.

#### **Peer relationships.**

With regard to this first (relationships) sub theme, it soon became apparent that all of the participants identified having a sense of belonging as being central to their most positive experiences of schooling before enrolling with Te Kura. Conversely, their experiences of bullying were consistently identified as having had a significant detrimental impact upon their alienation from face-to-face schooling.

### ***Positive peer relationships.***

Positive peer relationships were highly valued by all the participants and consistently identified as one of the most enjoyable experiences of their face-to-face schooling. This was not surprising given that positive peer relationships had earlier been identified by Clark (2014) and Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S and Richardson, C. (2003). (2003) as constituting a “key component” of Māori student academic achievement or failure (Bishop et al., 2003, p. 29). Participant Four epitomised this when he discussed how much he missed the company of school friends now that he no longer attends a face-to-face school. He particularly missed school athletic days and other events where students “buoyed each other up.” Moreover, being part of a positive group dynamic was seen by him as being the key motivation for attending school and working towards attaining academic qualifications.

Participant Five, alternatively, said, “It was the social aspect really. It was just being part of a group, being around other people, talking and communicating.” Participant Two also emphasised the importance of being with her peers. She said the best times at school were interval and lunchtime when she could “hang-out” with her friends: “I lived more for my friends really.” Therefore, fitting in, or belonging at school, was a crucial factor for each participant in terms of their enjoyment of school, continued attendance at school and levels of academic success.

The participants’ enjoyment of belonging to a group aligned with the traditional Māori concept of whānaungatanga; although they did not always use that word. To assist readers to understand how that traditional concept may be effectively applied to school settings, A. H. Macfarlane’s (2004) *Educultural Wheel* provides a helpful explanation. First, A. H. Macfarlane (2004) draws attention to the work of Bishop (1996) who he advised had previously described whānaungatanga as involving, “the process of establishing relationships in a Māori context” (Macfarlane, A. H., 2004, p. 64). Next, A. H. Macfarlane (2004) drew upon Ritchie (1992), to explained that, “whānaungatanga is the basic element that holds things Māori together; it affirms and transcends tribal identity and everything comes back to kinship” (Macfarlane, A. H., 2004, p. 65).

As a result, A. H. Macfarlane (2004, p. 65) advised that whānaungatanga is essentially at, “the heart of relationships and that, furthermore, it is essential that whānaungatanga [be] established within classrooms and a school community.”

With regard to relevant research conducted elsewhere in Waitaha (Canterbury), it is interesting to observe that Clarke (2010) also identified whānauangatanga as being critical to the retention of Māori students in local secondary school Te Reo Māori (Māori language) programmes. While Clarke's interviewees frequently mentioned whānauangatanga, they did so in ways that indicated a sense of belonging was critical to their academic success. Notably, Clarke's (2010) research participants emphasised their enjoyment of being with other like-minded rangatahi (young Māori people) in a culturally responsive environment.

In this study, it was also notable that the participants discussed their enjoyment of cultural activities at school such as kapa haka, while others emphasised the value of their Te Reo Māori classes. This was because they felt they were in a "Māori space" with a Māori ethos. For example, two of the students defined their Māori classes as having a different 'vibe' to the rest of their school environs. In some respects, this 'vibe' could be likened to the concept of pūmanawatanga as described by A. H. Macfarlane (2004). Macfarlane (2004) likened pūmanawatanga to the heart beat or pulse of school tone, classroom morale, and teacher attitudes.

In consideration of Clarke's (2010) research in local (Waitaha) schools, and A. H. Macfarlane's (2004) observations above; it was not surprising to discover that Te Reo Māori classes provided research participants in this study with their best experiences of whānauangatanga. Participant One, for example, recalled her previous secondary schooling experiences and stated that she "loved" being in her Te Reo Māori class. She said, "I don't know what it is, but, when you're around other Māori, it's more chilled-out and everything and we get along like family." Similarly Participant Two referred to her Te Reo Māori class as having a different kind of "vibe" to her other classes. She also described this class as being more like "family" (whānau).

The importance that the participants in this study placed on friendship also reflects the sentiments of successful Māori secondary school students interviewed elsewhere. For example, A. H. Macfarlane et al., (2014). They, too, found that successful Māori secondary students often mentioned having strong friendships as a key component to maintaining their wellbeing and sense of belonging at school. Sports and cultural activities were frequently identified as the most important avenues for maintaining a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging was, in turn, identified as a key factor in their engagement with the wider schooling process and eventual academic success (Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014, p.81).

International research has also demonstrated that the social aspect of school life contributes significantly to the retention of Indigenous students' and the enhancement of their achievement levels. The *Seeking their Voices* research conducted in Saskatchewan (Canada) by Berryman et al. (2014) found that the 'non-engaged' Indigenous students they interviewed experienced more negative experiences than their 'engaged' peers.

While it should be acknowledged that Berryman et al. (2014) were not conducting research with Indigenous students who were enrolled with a Canadian distance education provider (i.e. like Te Kura), many of the 'non-engaged' Indigenous students they interviewed were considered by authorities to be 'alienated' by their current and/or previous face-to-face schools. To some degree, this piece of Canadian research does compliment the findings of my New Zealand study. Like my analysis of positive peer relationships/social aspects (above and later), Berryman et al. (2014) reported that:

A social aspect of school also seemed to contribute to ['non-engaged' Indigenous] students' positive experiences: *"It was a fun school...I liked it. It was a real nice school, and I made a whole bunch of friends"* (S1) ... When asked to talk about school experiences one student said, *"Mine is great. But sometimes I am scared to lose my real friends or lose who I am"* (S4) (p. 77).

Berryman et al. (2014) provided data which suggested the importance of creating a positive family-like environment. One that could easily be created via the sharing of food and creating time and space for Indigenous language and performing arts to be a normal part of school life. For example, they noted that:

A different student reinforced social security: *I really liked it when I first came here. It was nice ... the students here were, they were awesome, you know...Lunch would be provided here and I just felt real safe here.* (S1) This student also described drumming and as part of lunch time activities dancing. (Berryman et al., 2014, p. 77)

Berryman et al. (2014) research findings mirrored this study when they found that negative experiences for their 'non-engaged' Indigenous students generally rotated around "stereotyping, racism and/or classism, bullying, and intimidation among a large school population" (Berryman et al., 2014, p. 77). Similar themes emerged from the narratives shared by the participants in my research. Of these, 'bullying' was the most frequently identified



‘negative’ peer relationship issue and this, once again; underlined the importance of the social aspect of schooling and the impact of negative peer relationships.

### *Negative peer relationships.*

Participant Two emphasised the importance of her peers when she explained that the “best times at school” were interval and lunchtime. This was when she could “hang out” with her friends. “I lived more for my friends really.” The term ‘fitting in’ (i.e. with one’s peers) was also repeatedly mentioned by the participants as being a crucial factor in terms of their enjoyment of school, academic success and continued school attendance. Participant Five, for example, explained that he put a considerable effort into ‘fitting in’ at school: “I often tried fitting in too much and I guess that didn’t help because I was trying to be someone else...like trying to play rugby and all that stuff”. He was acutely aware of the prevailing culture of the school and the risk of not ‘fitting in’ with the school’s norms for male behaviour. Eventually, his failure to ‘fit in’ with the rugby ethos of his peers led to his alienation from them.

When Participant Five described trying to fit into a school culture of “rugby and all that stuff”, his narrative was reminiscent of the pioneering cultural identity of Pākehā males described by writers such as Phillips (1987) and Coney (1990), who observed: “They would be muscled, sinewy and tough; They expressed their culture on the rugby field, in the backblocks [sections of rural land], in the great outdoors” (Coney, 1990, p.23). Participant Five was adamant that this type of school culture did not suit him, and trying to “fit in” made him feel like he was not “being true” to who he was in terms of his own cultural identity. His comments were interesting when one considers the historical literature around the long-standing influence of a Pākehā dominated rugby sub-culture upon male identity formation processes in New Zealand schools and wider society.

For example, Phillips (1987) assumed that this pioneering Pākehā male rugby sub-culture, strong in the rural province,; was going to see its demise due to the growing challenge of urban feminism and Māori activism; particularly in the wake of the 1981 Springbok Tour. However, Participant Five made it clear that little had changed in the rural Canterbury school he attended. His schooling experience attested to the fact that a rural Pākehā male rugby subculture still prevailed and posed a significant barrier to him experiencing a feeling of belonging (whānaungatanga) as a male Māori student in that school. Participant Four also stated that he was bullied for essentially being “true” to himself. “I guess the remarks that were thrown by

the bullies were things...about your character, they were about you and it's not something that you could change." His comment implied that there were things about himself, in relation to the prevailing expectations of masculine behaviour that he could not change in order to "fit-in" with the dominant male culture of that school.

The narratives of my study also revealed that, when their peer-relationships broke-down, the school environment became intolerable. Participant Eight, for example, recalled that girls in her peer group made school life feel like, "torture." Several participants recollected serious incidents of bullying they suffered at the hands of other students. Each described severe instances of emotional and physical bullying by other students. This contributed significantly to their alienation from schools and was the principal reason for them leaving a face-to-face schooling environment.

It was also clear from Participant Eight's experience that being challenged about the authenticity of her Māori identity was a considerable source of discomfort at school. She described herself as a "white Māori" and recalled comments such as, "you're just a wanna be Māori...because ...I'm half caste." Due to comments like this, she went on to explain that, "I don't always put myself out there as Māori girl." Therefore, Participant Eight struggled to find a group to belong to amongst her peers. She recalled spending lunchtimes and morning teas in the art room by herself. This was because she had no friends at school and eventually got to the point that she didn't want to go to school anymore.

The research of Webber (2008) aligns with the experiences of Participant Eight because it too illuminated similar cultural politics revolving around questions of cultural authenticity and/or hybridity. These questions are faced by many students of mixed ethnic descent on a daily basis. What made Webber's research significant, and relevant to Participant Eight's narrative; was the fact that it exposed how some people of mixed Māori and Pākehā descent can only occupy the boundaries of both groups, permanently. Every day people like Participant Eight are wavering between frequently unspoken assumptions about who is considered a 'real Māori' in te ao Māori (the Māori world), and how to be the 'right kind of Māori' in te ao Pākehā (the Pākehā world).

Participant Six, meanwhile, felt she had been bullied because of a combination of her social class status when she attended a New Zealand primary school and because of racism she encountered at an Australian secondary school. Participant Six experienced what she called "silly comments" made by students at an Australian High school. She attributed this to her

Māori ethnicity and felt these Australian students were intimidated by her physical appearance, which differed to theirs.

She advised me that she previously attended what she considered to be “quite a posh primary school” in Christchurch. She left after bullying incidents where she felt the school sided with students who came from wealthier families. Participant Six comments indicated that she felt sensitive about the fact that her socioeconomic status as the child of a single parent was not on a par with her Pākehā peers. This is not surprising as research demonstrates that Māori children are proportionately more likely to be exposed to the impacts of poverty than the average New Zealand child (Imlach, Gunasekara & Carter 2012; Fergusson & Boden 2015).

The participant narratives of my study also revealed that, when their relationships with other students broke-down, the school environment became intolerable. Participant Five, for example, recalled that, “bullies began throwing pens, books, dictionaries and anything they could find at me in class.” Several participants recollected serious incidents of bullying they suffered at the hands of other students. Each described severe instances of emotional and physical bullying by other students. This contributed significantly to their alienation from schools and was the principal reason for them leaving a face-to-face schooling environment.

This finding is not surprising as there is much evidence to suggest that bullying is a significant issue in many New Zealand schools. Te Kura has a large number of students on its roll who have left school as a result of bullying. Moreover, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s latest survey (in 2015 with results published 2017), conducted in association with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), revealed that just over a quarter of the New Zealand students taking part in the survey reported being subject to some kind of bullying at least a few times a month (OECD, 2017). The PISA research also stated that bullying has serious consequences for victims which can include, skipping classes, dropping out of school and a negative impact on academic performance. Participant Four recalled that he did everything he could to stay away from school:

I was quite sneaky back then, I was very good at being able to kind of get my way out of getting out of school at that time because I was really scared, I was extremely scared and I’d done everything I possibly could you know to you know stay home.

Furthermore, the OECD (2017) found that bullying is linked to many young New Zealanders suffering from anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and loneliness. This backdrop further

recalled Participant Eight who linked her struggle with depression to her experiences of school bullying. She said, “I suffer from depression ...it was bad when I was bullied.” Likewise, Participant Four recalled, “I used to go home really sore and ... stay in my room a lot.” He insisted that if it wasn’t for bullying he would definitely have stayed at school however, the physical bullying he experienced left him feeling intimidated and scared and not willing to be in that school environment any more. Other participants were also clear that if it had not been for the bullying they would have stayed in school.

### **The participants’ relationships with their former teachers.**

With regard to this second (‘relationships’) sub theme, it was notable that most participants elected to share memories of ‘positive’ teacher and student interactions at their previous secondary schools – prior to enrolling with Te Kura. However, these experiences also and were regularly overshadowed by ‘negative’ interactions with other teachers. This was not surprising given that the participants had all been ‘alienated’ from their previous face-to-face schools.

As mentioned previously, the participants’ desire to belong amongst their peers aligned closely with the traditional Māori concept of whānaungatanga. This concept was also central to their most positive relationships with teachers. This finding, in turn, recalls the work of Bishop, Ladwig, and Berryman (2013), who described the centrality of relationships for effective pedagogy as involving the

“processes of whānaungatanga that use Māori language, cultural understandings, decision-making processes, means of sense-making, and students’ prior knowledge and language create a pedagogic approach that would more effectively support Māori students’ engagement and learning” (p. 191).

Māori students interviewed for *Te Kotahitanga* study (2006) also described the context most supportive of their learning as being one where teachers establish caring and learning classroom relationships that they described in terms of whānau-like relationships, or whānaungatanga (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). Positive relationships with teachers that were indicative of whānaungatanga were similarly recalled by each participant, consistently, in my research. Each participant claimed positive relationships with teachers were a highly valued component of their schooling experience. In the process, they each recalled teachers who were “supportive”, “helpful” and “pushed” students to achieve their potential. The participants particularly

enjoyed teachers who had a “good sense of humour” and who treated them in a “friendly” manner.

As the previous chapter (Chapter Four) indicated, the participants often developed closer relationships with teachers who coached them in sport or engaged with them in other cultural activities. It was also noticeable that two participants mentioned that the transition to secondary school and to having multiple teachers at secondary school often made forming close relationships with teachers more difficult than at primary school. This finding was not surprising and recalls the work of Cocklin (1999), who found that students’ social adjustment to transition is closely connected to their relationships with their teachers. Cocklin (1999) discovered that the character of the teacher, and the type of pedagogies employed, were key challenges identified by students transitioning from primary into secondary school settings. These frequently included the relational processes of interacting as learners and teachers. The students encountered by Cocklin (1999) reported a regression in their relationships with teachers at the secondary level.

Almost all of the participants in my study recalled at least one teacher who they had a “supportive” relationship with. These teachers were frequently described by the participants as advocates who had provided practical support for them when they were facing challenges in either home or school settings. With regard to school settings, it was notable that the classrooms of the “supportive teachers” were sometimes a safe haven at lunchtime for the bullied or lonely participants. As mentioned elsewhere, Participant Eight, for example, recalled spending most lunch times and morning tea times in an art class due to a breakdown in her friendship group.

Of further interest, all the research participants valued teachers with a “sense of humour” who went out of their way to build friendships with them. Participant Three recalled her history teacher who had a good sense of humour and treated students like friends rather than just students. Participant Four recalls his favourite teacher as being someone who “would get very involved with us and it just made us feel special...she was like another parent.” A. H. Macfarlane et al. (2014, p. 159) defined these teachers as “touchstone teachers” and considered them an important part of the success of the Māori students they encountered. The importance of “touch stone teachers” was most evident within my research when participants discussed their experiences of being in their Te Reo Māori classes. This was not surprising given that A. H. Macfarlane et al., (2014) reported that “Touch stone teachers who act as mentors, advocates and confidants in the school context are often Māori teachers” (p. 159).

It is significant that Participant One, when recalling her classroom experiences, stated that she loved being in her Te Reo Māori class and that, “I don’t know what it is, but, when you’re around other Māori, it’s more chilled out and everything and we get along like family.” Similarly Participant Two referred to her Te Reo Māori class having a different kind of ‘vibe’ to her other classes, she also describes this class as being more like family.’ The Te Reo Māori teacher of Participant Two appeared to provide the closest link to whānaungatanga being experienced in a face-to-face school setting. Participant Two believed her Te Reo teacher had a unique connection with her through her family ties and through participating in kapa haka “she knew our family...It was more like an aunty kind of vibe rather than a teacher.”

These findings resonated with the work of Clarke (2010) who also found that Māori students in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region often believed their relationship with their Te Reo Māori teacher was different then that with teachers from other subject areas. Māori students in my research, like those in Clarke’s study (2010); perceived this particular pedagogical relationship to be more “intimate” and more of a “bond” (Clarke, 2010, p.74). For example, a participant in Clarke’s (2010) research stated that Kaiako Māori were able to create learning environments where students felt ‘safe’ to be Māori and rules were implemented in a relaxed and fair manner. Furthermore, this type of learning environment did not occur in all subject areas.

Within this research, Participant Two similarly recalled the very practical care demonstrated by her Te Reo teacher –which included helping her to set clear goals for attendance and arranging shared meals for meeting her class attendance goals. Participant Two, when describing her Te Reo Māori teacher, said: “She knew how to talk to me, really; how to whip me into shape.” This statement, in turn, highlights, the extra cultural responsibility that Torepe (2011) identified as often sitting upon the shoulders of Māori teachers. Torepe (2011) found that, in addition to their designated teaching responsibilities, Māori teachers in the Waitaha region often feel a deep sense of obligation and responsibility for Māori students. Torepe (2011) further advised that this finding resonated with the earlier research of Bloor (1996). As Torepe and Manning (2017) explained:

“In addition to their usual teaching responsibilities, Bloor (1996) reported that Māori teachers were expected to ... facilitate communications between the school, its Māori parents and whānau (families) and the wider Māori community. Bloor’s (1996) teacher participants similarly felt a deep sense of duty for supporting the academic progress and general wellbeing

of Māori students within their schools. They also felt that they were expected to cater for so-called ‘problem Māori’ students” (Torepe & Manning, 2017, p. 4).

My findings, regarding the significant role that Māori teachers play in providing emotional and cultural support to Māori students in Waitaha secondary schools, consequently, align with the analyses of Clarke (2010), Torepe (2011) and Paniora (2017). It is also notable that these three independent pieces of research correspond with the findings of the *Kā Awatea* research conducted in Rotorua schools by A. H. Macfarlane et al, (2014). In short, the *Kā Awatea* case study, also found that the Māori teachers interviewed felt they played a unique role in supporting the emotional development of students by being able to ‘nurture’ Māori student’s spiritual and cultural uniqueness and capabilities (Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014).

This has significant implications when one considers the negative relationships with teachers described by the Māori students who participated in my research (and other research projects, elsewhere).

### ***Negative relationships with teachers.***

Each of the participants also recalled situations where relationships with teachers were strained through subject streaming, deficit labelling and low expectations. Likewise, Participant two reacted to teacher criticism and deficit discourse with increased resistance and defiance. She complained that:

They [the teachers] said ‘you will be a bus driver when you are older’ and that I am ‘not going to amount to anything really’; which is quite harsh and of course I won’t do anything if they’re [i.e. teachers] going to say that!

The participants in this study also felt they didn’t get enough of their teacher’s time. Several participants, for example, alleged their teachers only helped those students who these teachers believed possessed academic “potential.” Others describe feelings of being “doubted” by their teachers while at school or feeling that their teachers underestimated their intelligence in various face-to-face school settings. One of the most telling comments to underline this lack of confidence was a statement from a participant who recalled the only goal she set when commencing Year 9 at secondary school was “not to fail.” While this may, on face value, seem a laudable goal; when seen in the context of her other remarks, it clearly highlights that failure was a much bigger self-expectation than success.

These comments are consistent with the *Te Kotahitanga* research findings of Bishop & Berryman (2006) which found that most teachers interviewed tended to explain learning difficulties among Māori students in deficit terms. Māori students interviewed for the *Te Kotahitanga* project believed their teachers had lower expectations for them than they had for their non-Māori peers. Several participants in my research, likewise, believed that the scope of their schools' streaming systems meant that career pathways were already limited for those in the lower streams. Participant Seven, for example, linked her absenteeism to her previous school's insistence that she was held back a year while her peers went on to commence Year 11. Meanwhile, Participant Three said that, "being in a lower stream" resulted in her being told explicitly that this meant it wouldn't be possible for her to become a doctor and that she should instead consider a career in nursing:

That's how it's kind of seen in school, if you are in Class X you're just someone who is not intelligent ...lots of people drop out in Year 12 and become like 'tradies' and stuff ... Not that that's bad thing to become, at all; but that's the kind of expectation.

The experiences of Participants Seven and Three are significant when one considers the findings of a recent Christchurch study conducted by Hornby and Witte (2014) which concluded that schools using an ability banding system could not identify any positive consequences or specific advantages for Māori students. Furthermore, Hornby and Witte (2014) noted that grouping practices in most Christchurch (Ōtautahi) schools is not based on research evidence but instead on the subjective viewpoints of those responsible for school management and governance.

The work of Hornby and Witte (2014) consequently suggests that a trend of banding students in ability groups does exist in Ōtautahi/Waitaha schools despite a large amount of research evidence that suggests banding students is not an effective strategy for raising student achievement levels. From the shared narratives of the Māori students who participated in my research, banding was viewed as constituting a systemic barrier to their aspirations. So, too, were teacher responses to incidents of bullying experienced by most research participants. For example, Participant Five felt blamed by the guidance counsellor for the bullying he experienced as he was told he must be doing something to aggravate it (the bullying). ... "You don't have to aggravate a situation to have someone bully you."

Participant four believed his situation got worse due to his school's response as he was considered a "nark" by the bullies which resulted in more bullying and Participant Eight felt



that the teachers who dealt with the bullying were not on her side and therefore the cycle of bullying started again. Participant Six recalled that her whānau felt angry after meeting with school management as they perceived that school management demonstrated a bias to the other students involved in the bullying incident.

Participant Five recalled that the truancy officer went to the school to “battle for me”, but after his mother later had a meeting with the principal, Participant Five’s whānau concluded the situation was not being taken seriously enough by the school. Participant Five said that his whānau were not impressed that the school expected him to, “shrug it off [the bullying]” like it’s nothing.” He added, “it’s not...acceptable...so I ended up leaving school.”

### **Whānau support and whānau/school relationships.**

With regard to this final (‘relationships’) sub theme, it was notable that whānau support was highly valued by most participants and that in other instances, economic pressures experienced by some whānau had undermined their ability to support participants. While examples of positive school and whānau relationships were mentioned by participants in some instances, they were largely overshadowed by more negative interactions. These interactions were, notably, quite limited in their scope. Most participants proposed that strained relationships between their whānau (families) and schools constituted a significant factor in their alienation from schooling and did not reflect what might be widely considered a healthy partnership between the participants’ familial and schooling environs.

### ***Whānau support.***

All participants discussed the importance of having the support of whānau in their educational journeys. For example, Participant Eight stated, “I was ready to give up last week on schooling altogether and my aunty said: ‘no, you’re not! You’ve got a bright future ahead of you, and you’ve got the brain’ [i.e. to do well academically].” Other participants referred to the motivation that their respective whānau had given them. This gave them the desire, in turn, to seek ways to make their whānau members proud of them.

For example, Participant Seven explained that she used the memory of her late father as an inspiration for pursuing her educational goals. It was also clear from all of the participants’ narratives that their whānau ‘fronted-up’ at school whenever they were facing challenges. This was a significant finding because the analysis of the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) reports

(Manning et al., 2011) also revealed that there is much New Zealand research to suggest that the majority of whānau are interested in their children's education and are prepared to work in partnership with schools to support their learning. This challenges deficit views about whānau aspirations and involvement in their children's education.

### ***Whānau/school relationships.***

Participant Four recalled that he enjoyed the involvement of his family in his schooling at primary school, but this was something that changed when he attended secondary school. When reflecting on why this was the case, he said that, "as you grow older the involvement of the parents really started to fall apart because at primary school ... the whole family actually was involved." This was salient because in the narratives of several participants, it was evident that their whānau engagement with secondary schools appears to have been solely limited to formal processes requiring their whānau to only engage with schools on formal (punitive) processes relating to issues of bullying and absenteeism.

This is problematic because the Ministry of Education's strategy *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success* (2013-2017) advised that parental involvement in education is a critical factor for enhancing Māori student success. A related piece of earlier research, commissioned by the Ministry emphasised the need for collaborative partnerships with whānau and iwi, whereby whānau and iwi may have an equal say in what happens in school for their children (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 10.) This report also drew attention to historical trends in whānau/school relationships. The authors asserted, "that in order to make this equal partnership for learning possible it is necessary to acknowledge that schools have a long history of not being open to working together with Māori parents as equal partners" (Cooper et al., 2010, p.10.)

Likewise, the research of A. H. Macfarlane et al. (2014) also emphasised the importance of ensuring that Māori parents are actively engaged in productive partnerships with schools. They advised a large body of evidence reiterated the view that the involvement of whānau with their children's learning in school can help Māori children to achieve academic, cultural and sporting successes at school, especially if schools encourage this to happen (Macfarlane, A. H., et al., 2014). Canadian research has drawn similar findings regarding the need for Indigenous students' families to be treated as 'equal partners' in the process of schooling their children. For example, Berryman et al. (2014, p. 104), advised that the following quote from an Indigenous Canadian parent, they interviewed, epitomised the importance of robust communications between home and school. This parent said:

When the teacher engages a parent or involves the parent in what's going on in the classroom, at least we can say something about it or do something about it as a parent. But otherwise, if you are going to keep me up outside of the glass door, like I said; that's where I will stay.

Therefore, it was also interesting to observe that the research of Manning et al., (2011) and A. H. Macfarlane et al., (2014) aligned closely with the findings of Berryman et al. (2014). For example, Berryman et al. (2014) emphasised that sound communication processes are critical to the development and maintenance of healthy partnerships between (Canadian) Indigenous families and schools. They drew upon Indigenous Canadian parental voices to advise that:

Several parent voices articulated the importance of communication and dialogue. *"Communication is a big thing" (S5); and "If something comes up [teacher] will text me...lets me know when things are going on with him and we just keep an open dialogue when it comes to his education" (S5).* One parental voice identified the importance of communication between teacher and parent in determining pre-emptive action, *"I want to know as a parent sooner rather than later. If you're ten assignments behind, what can I do? If your assignments are behind then I can do something and I am going sit down, see if you need any help right" (S5).* Parents acknowledged that effective teachers (and schools) create open lines of communication with parents: *"And what I notice here from this school is that if one of our children doesn't show up they are calling and asking if everything is okay?" (S2).* It was acknowledged that effective communication between teachers and parents requires parental involvement, *"The principal and counsellors know that I am very proactive about my children's education and sports activities.*

With this Canadian research in mind, it became abundantly clear to me that the narratives of most participants in my study suggested that their whānau involvement in Waitaha secondary schools was limited to their schools' formal processes for dealing with issues of bullying and absenteeism. This narrow framework for engagement draws further attention to the observations of Cooper et al., (2010) and Manning et al. (2011), whose review of four *Best Evidence Synthesis* reports (commissioned by the Ministry of Education), reinforced the message that the absence of a wide range of constructive relationships between school and home adversely affects Māori student achievement levels.

This, in turn, suggests that the formal school processes they experienced did not form the basis for a productive ‘equal partnership’ between their whānau and Crown entities (i.e. the schools concerned) that could be deemed consistent with the intent of the Crown’s own ‘principles for action on the Treaty of Waitangi’ (New Zealand State Services Commission, 2005; Manning et al., 2011). The following passage now addresses the research participants’ concerns regarding the pedagogies they encountered in face-to-face secondary schools.

## **Pedagogy**

Three sub-themes emerged from the data collected in relation to the key theme of ‘relationships’. They include, ‘teacher centred vs student centred pedagogies, the ‘hidden curriculum’ and ‘institutional constraints’. Each of these sub themes will now be discussed in relation to academic and research literature.

### **Teacher vs student centred pedagogies.**

The participants in this research had a lot to say about pedagogy. Some participants felt ‘pressured’ by time constraints. Meanwhile, Participant Five emphasised that he needed to move around and couldn’t handle sitting down all the time. All the participants believed that they could have ‘learned more’ by utilising a variety of learning strategies rather than just teachers relying on what Freire (1970) described as being the more traditional ‘transmission’ pedagogy of listening to the teacher.

The ‘transmission model’ (or ‘banking system’) was also alluded to when Participants mentioned ‘completing work sheets’ and being too ‘scared’ to ask their teachers questions. Participant Four could see the class that often occurred between what he wanted to learn and his ‘passion’ (as he called it) versus the things that the curriculum prescribed for him. His views were also indicative of a hidden curriculum, something that is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

What Participant Four also highlighted the mechanical nature of school timetables and a preoccupation with the assessment of outputs. He recalls being rushed through a curriculum that ultimately ended in a weekly test. Participant Four said, “we were rushed through the subject each week.” Participant Three agreed. She was also adamant that a ‘transmission’ style of pedagogy (Freire, 1970), which simply involved “listening to the teacher”; did not work for

her. As a result, she left her face-to-face secondary school in search of an “alternative” approach to teaching and learning that worked better for her. She said:

“In year 12 I realised that I didn’t like sitting in class and having someone talking at me because I found myself going home and I hadn’t taken anything in... so when I heard I could go to Te Kura and control my own learning [I felt] it is a lot more me I think.”

The narratives of participants in this research also reflect the findings of Bishop and Berryman (2006) which emphasised that Māori students prefer to be interacted with discursively as individuals in groups rather than in whole class contexts. Their *Te Kotahitanga* research earlier revealed (Bishop et al., 2003) that teacher proximity to students is closer in a ‘discursive’ classroom due to the fact that teachers constantly move around a classroom as opposed to the ‘transmission model’ appraised by Freire (1970) and further critiqued by the participants in my study.

In summary, Freire (1970, p.110) noted that, “the educators role in the ‘banking’ system of education is to ‘fill’ the students by making deposits of information which he or she constitutes as knowledge.” Therefore, the banking model of education according to Freire (1970) is anti-dialogical, meaning that content and evaluation are prescribed by the teacher without negotiation. Even the physical distance between the teacher and the students is increased as the teacher positions himself/herself at the front of a traditional classroom, aloof from the students like a proverbial ‘sage on stage’ (Freire 1970).

The narratives of the students in my study echoed Freire’s (1970) concerns regarding the detrimental impact of anti-dialogical teaching practices. In New Zealand, the *Te Kotahitanga* research conducted by Bishop et al., (2003) also supported the thrust of Freire’s critique and aligned with the views of the alienated young Māori adults who participated in this study. Many of the Māori students they interviewed (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2006) also revealed that they felt less confident to interact with teachers in front of a whole class setting than on a one-on-one basis. The participants in my study, too; emphasised the difficulties they felt learning in a whole class setting where they had little opportunity to engage, directly, with their teachers to ask questions.

Participant Seven for example, felt that her learning difficulties were “not recognised” by her teachers and she felt “embarrassed” to discuss her learning needs with the teacher in front of other students. She was scared that the other students would make fun of her contributions to

class discussion (particularly if called upon by the teacher). Other participants felt that in a whole class setting, their teachers did not have enough time to spend with them. The work of McKinley (2000) is interesting when one considers these findings in relation to the theorising of Freire (1970) and the research of Bishop et al., (2003). McKinley (2000) emphasised that effective teachers of Māori students recognise that using a range of different strategies to engage students led to a more cognitively stimulating classroom.

The Ministry of Education (2008) also emphasised the effectiveness of learning activities that involve wider group and peer interaction within the classroom. Locally, Māori students interviewed by Paniora (2017), in his Ōtautahi-based study; also indicated that they preferred learning approaches for their children based on best practice and a ‘range’ of student-centred pedagogical approaches. Participants in his study considered that outmoded transmission-style methods of instruction – what they often termed “busy work”; did not support Māori achievement.

To sum-up, while each of the participants in my study were able to identify teachers and classes that they particularly enjoyed it was made abundantly clear to me that the pedagogy they least enjoyed was the ‘transmission model’ where they had no control over how they learned or what was taught. It is clear that good (student-centred) teaching and learning pedagogies are an important way of engaging Māori students and raising achievement however, what was also consistent in the participant narratives central to this research, was the absence of culturally responsive classrooms where a range of engaging teaching strategies were experienced.

### **The hidden curriculum.**

Since 1877, Māori cultural perspectives have been marginalised by (ethno-centric) curriculum frameworks (Adams, et al. 2000, Walker, 1978; G.H Smith 1990;. 2000, Manning 2017b Walker, 1978;). These frameworks regularly emphasised the benefits of the ‘flexibility’ they have afforded New Zealand teachers (Manning, 2017b). As a result of this pliability, the cultural perceptions of Māori students and their whānau have often been overlooked by teachers who have exercised their professional judgment to select traditional (i.e. Eurocentric) topics over Māori-related content (see Manning 2009, 2011, 2017b). This historical trend has contributed to what G. H. Smith (1990) denounced as, ‘Pākehā capture’ of the curriculum and what Martin (2017) consistently refers to as an inherently mono-lingual schooling curriculum

in Ōtautahi and elsewhere. This has not gone unnoticed by Māori communities. With regard to the history curriculum, for example, Adams et al. (2000) observed that:

Māori have become increasingly aware that school curriculums are essentially cultural and political instruments ... Māori have hotly contested the interpretations of history provided by previous curriculum documents which have treated one group's view of New Zealand history as the only view, and actively ignored what we know to be more accurate accounts of the relationship between Māori and Europeans (p. 178).

The narratives of the participants I encountered indicated that they, too, had encountered a mono cultural and mono-lingual curriculum during their face-to-face schooling and that this had caused frustration. While most of the participants' narratives recall some opportunities to learn Te Reo Māori or tikanga within their schools, Participant Four stated that there was "little depth" to what he was offered. He claimed that Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) was not a focus, but rather a "surface coating." Participant Four pointed-out that the curriculum he encountered at his previous school did not reflect Māori perspectives unless this was an interest of a particular teacher. He added that, "they did have the odd Māori language week, but it was something that really wasn't focussed on."

Māori language, culture and identity were therefore considered 'add-ons'. In some respects, Participant Four's description of his last face-to-face school's incorporation of Māori content recalled Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) definitions of the 'contributions' and 'additive' and approaches. Participant Five recalled, "Māori was good it gave students who are Māori or part Māori an opportunity to explore ... it was a subject that I enjoyed whereas Maths and English, they're not cultural."

To summarise, the 'contributions approach' tends to limit minority ethnic groups' content to special days, weeks and months related to officially recognised ethnic occasions and festivities. In New Zealand a 'contributions approach', similar to that described by Banks and McGee-Banks (2010); might occur during officially sanctioned holidays and events such as Waitangi Day commemorations and celebrations, Matariki festivities and Māori Language Week. As Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) suggested, the 'contributions approach' is often implemented during such celebrations, teachers may elect to involve students in activities related to the ethnic group being celebrated/commemorated, but little or nothing is taught about that ethnic group before or after the event or occasion.

The ‘additive approach’, also inferred by Participant Four’s narrative, is equally limited in its transformative potential to create a culturally-responsive curriculum (Banks and McGee-Banks, 2010). In summary an ‘additive approach’ occurs whenever teachers (usually from the dominant ethnic group/culture) simply add minority ethnic groups’ content, concepts, themes and perspectives without changing the overall curriculum structure (Banks and McGee-Banks, 2010). Such an approach, in a New Zealand context, allows non-Māori teachers to incorporate Māori content into ‘their’ curriculum without restructuring the curriculum design, delivery, assessment and evaluation processes, as argued by Manning (2009).

Banks and McGee-Banks (2010), consequently, maintain that, while the ‘additive approach’ holds the potential to be a first step towards transforming a monocultural/mono-lingual curriculum into a multi-cultural/multi-lingual curriculum; this approach still holds several disadvantages. Most notably, Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) argued that it usually ends in the teacher and students viewing ‘ethnic content’ from the perspectives of so-called ‘mainstream’ historians, authors, artisans and scientists. This is because the ‘additive approach’ does not require the restructuring of the curriculum design, delivery, assessment and evaluation processes that one would find in a culturally-responsive (negotiated) curriculum like those advocated by Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999), Cajete (1994), Penetito (2004, 2005), and Manning (2009, 2011, 2017a).

This is particularly noteworthy when one considers that the participants interviewed in the Ōtautahi-based research of Paniora (2017), which was mentioned previously in Chapter Three. His research emphasised the benefits the Māori students, he interviewed, had experienced by seeing Māori knowledge included across curriculum subjects in a culturally-responsive manner. They believed that this was validating and acknowledged the existence of Māori students in the classrooms. The participants of Paniora’s (2017) study advocated for alternative ways of organising school groups in different ways such as whānau groups, or vertical forms where Māori students could support each other. A culturally responsive learning environment as advocated by (Macfarlane, A. H., et al; 2007) provides the best conditions for effective pedagogy and curriculum.

In my study, meanwhile, school wide systems such as the time table or the exam system were also seen to be a barrier to Māori student engagement in Te Reo Māori at school. For example, Participant Three was not permitted to study Te Reo Māori because she did not have enough language background to sit the examinations at the end of the year. In order to gain access to



Te Reo Māori she opted to enrol for a night class in the community. Similarly, Participant Nine was faced with a clash between her dance class and the Te Reo Māori class.

She dropped out of the Te Reo Māori option because she wanted to study dance despite the fact her mother wanted her to keep learning Te Reo Māori. Therefore, this ‘choice’ caused some tension at home: “My mum really wanted me to take it (Te Reo Māori) but I flipped out.” However, since enrolling with Te Kura, Participant Nine has chosen Te Reo Māori in her programme of learning. She emphasised that it was important for her to, “at least know the basics.”

The work of Clarke (2010) revealed that Māori students elsewhere in Waitaha schools have also found their school timetables to be often restrictive as optional subjects were pitched against each other. He reported that, “Students following Arts, Technology or Languages based programmes would often find they must select one or the other” (Clarke, 2010, p.94). As a result Clarke (2010) expressed concern that, “although school charters often reflect a sentiment prioritising Te Reo, the reality of the timetable structure suggests otherwise” (Clarke, 2010, p.95). It is clear from the participant narratives in my study that they, too, remain eager for opportunities to develop their capability in Te Reo Māori.

All of the students in my study stated that they would look for opportunities in the future to develop their Te Reo Māori capabilities. It was safe to conclude therefore, that Te Reo Māori was viewed by all participants as an important expression of their cultural identities. This is significant when one considers the historical legacy of colonisation, outlined earlier in Chapter Two, which serves as a backdrop to this study. To reiterate (see Chapter Two), nationwide, several generations of Māori whānau have had the right to speak and learn in their native tongue replaced with the language of the coloniser due to numerous assimilation policies (Walker, 1987; Manning 2009; Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014; Martin, 2016).

In relation to the Waitaha regional context, Martin (2016) details how within that region there are limited resources available to support students and whānau to acquire skills in Te Reo Māori. According to Martin (2016), Māori students may experience isolation in English medium secondary schooling where they do not perceive Māori language is valued to the same extent as English. She thus explains that educational institutions have a large role to play in enabling the acquisition of Māori language and that:

Schools in New Zealand need to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of children and the damage and loss from the past needs to be acknowledged, and restored (and “re-storied” for success) and language valued to ensure regeneration continues. Unless this occurs, loss, racial assumptions and historical trauma will continue to be carried across generations. A constantly changing world needs to continue to recognise the value of Te Reo Māori.” (Martin 2016, p. 294)

The theme of ‘learner identity’ also emerged as another significant finding.

## **Learner identity**

It is clear from the narratives of each of the participants in this study that they have built a learner identity that rejects some of the discourse around ‘disengaged or alienated youth’ they had previously encountered. This was significant because the work of Atweh, Bland, Carrington and Cavanagh, (2008) emphasised that much of the literature associated with students who are ‘alienated’ or ‘disengaged’ from schooling tends to pathologise them and deal with them as ‘failures’. However, each of the participants’ narratives in this study revealed a positive learner identity.

Each participant articulated that they placed high value in gaining an education and underlined the confidence they now have in themselves as learners. This is interesting considering many of their accounts of face-to-face schooling experiences reveal some less than ideal experiences and many challenges. As a result, these narratives resonated with the work of Higgins (2013), who asserted that participants in her Ōtautahi study of post compulsory education developed learning identities that were different from their school identities. She advised that: “Most reported experiencing school as alienating, and many had been labelled trouble makers and failures by their teachers. They were keen to reject these labels, but had been unable to do this while in school” (Higgins, 2013, p. 179).

Amongst the participants in this study, Participant Two stated she didn’t bother setting goals when she was at face-to-face school because she knew she wouldn’t achieve them, however she has now set educational goals for a future career. She now describes herself as “determined”, “curious” and “smart.” These descriptions of herself contrast with what she shared about her earlier secondary schooling experiences where she said she found the classes “too hard” and, in her words, she “took the easy way out” by only “going [to school] for the alcohol and friends.” Participant Two’s descriptions of her current sense of ‘self’ contrasted

strongly with the labels she felt were previously “pinned” onto her at her former (face-to-face) secondary school. She recalled that, in those years, she felt, “labelling is my life really [being told] you’re not going to amount to nothing.” Her increased confidence was further evident when she stated that, in today’s context, “I don’t feel so small.”

In the case of Participant Eight (a young mother), her motivation to develop her learner identity was particularly strong. As a result, her narrative provided another interesting insight that correlated with other local (Ōtautahi) research. Participant Eight advised that she is now more motivated because she wants to be a good role model for her son. She explained, “I want to do it for [name withheld]...to teach him stuff and yeah make him do high school, get all his levels.” Her identity as a learner has, consequently, been strengthened in recognition of the responsibility she feels towards supporting her son’s education and future.

These findings resonate with the work of Hinden-Miller (2012), who quoted the work of Wylie (2009) who reported that parenting can be an incentive to do well and a catalyst for personal development and growth (Hinden-Miller, 2012, p.20). Furthermore, Hinden-Miller (2012) asserted that the teen parents in her study were able to “support the refashioning of the young women’s identities by offering them narrative possibilities of self as successful learners, within a safe and nurturing environment built upon warm, respectful and affirming relationships with teachers and other members of staff”

Each participant in this study articulated a clear sense of direction and goals for the future. Several participants were able to reflect on how their current educational goals had developed and broadened since leaving their previous (face-to-face) schools. Participant Five, for example, advised that he has also developed greater confidence in his own abilities, as a learner, since leaving his former face-to-face school. He stressed that, “I kind of under estimated my intelligence in a way at face-to-face school because there was always people in my class who I thought were smarter than me; but thinking, now, that we’re really no different.”

Similarly, Participant One stated she only set one goal when she started Year 9 in a face-to-face setting and that was, “not to fail.” In contrast she had set future career goals that involved tertiary training. Participant Four, meanwhile, described himself, currently, as being very confident in his own ability: “Yes I feel confident in my ability...I feel very capable, feel very capable.” In the same way, Participant Four feels confident about her ability. She added that “even though I was in low class in Year 11 when I started doing well ... I realised I can do anything that I want to put my mind to.” Participant Four went on to say that she now feels “on

track” with her plans for the future. In contrast participants’ narratives of previous school experiences conveyed a sense that the participants felt they had to ‘battle’ against various forces to achieve educational success.

Participant Three, for example, described the challenge of moving into top streamed classes as, “I pushed to go into the top class in Year 12 ... I did get into them in the end and that is when I realised I could do anything I wanted to do.” Participant Five, meanwhile, described the pressure of trying to fit in at school. He said, “when you have the pressure of these situations it can sometimes affect your confidence and your self-esteem.” Likewise, Participant Four stressed that, “I used to have the feeling that people used to doubt me .... and this sometimes sets you back really big.” However, he also stressed that now he uses this as a motivational tool. “It’s just really motivating for me ... I get into like the spirit where I just work so hard and just show them ... I can do it.” However, despite the challenges faced by the participants, they all expressed a confidence in themselves and for their futures.

### **Re-storying of learner identity.**

It was notable that most participants had been able to re-story their own senses of learner identity after spending time critically reflecting upon those factors that had most significantly informed their alienation from face-to-face schooling. Freire (1970) coined this process, ‘conscientisation’. In summary, Conscientisation, according to Freire (1970), involves the process whereby ‘oppressed’ people develop an awareness of their situation and are able to assign meaning to it and begin to challenge it. This, he proposed, reflected a level of ‘consciousness’.

Freire (1970) stated that a crucial level of critical consciousness is evident when people have a growing understanding of their own capabilities, recognise how ‘oppression’ occurs and how one can fight it by intervening. Participant Four’s reflection in his narrative of his schooling experience reveals a level of critical consciousness or ‘conscientisation’ (Freire, 1970). Participant Four advised me that, “yeah it was pretty hard...I guess it’s made me who I am today and you know I don’t regret anything.”

He was also able to distance himself from the bullying behaviour he received when he stated, “there’s nothing weak about you it’s the weak things about them ( the bullies) and I think a lot of it is jealousy and things like that.” Participant Five echoed these sentiments when he reflected on the bullying he also experienced at school. He said, “every experience you have..

kind of gives you a new perspective on life and you can either accept it and move forward and work hard to be what you want to be or ... not really settle.” Other participants used the words, such as ‘self-management’, ‘being organised’, ‘having confidence in myself’, ‘knuckling down’ and ‘working hard’, ‘taking risks’, when they discussed what they needed to do to reach the academic goals they had set for themselves.

These words underlined the participants’ belief in their own agency and control over their education success.

## **Conclusion**

This discussion of findings chapter has analysed the recurring (key) themes that emerged from the findings described in Chapter Four. To reiterate, the key themes discussed here have included (i) relationships; (ii) pedagogy and; (iii) learner identity. The first of the three key themes discussed revolved around the significance of ‘relationships’. A set of three sub-themes provided a structure that enabled me to provide a critical analysis of the types of relationships that were of foremost concern to the participants. These sub themes included, ‘peer relationships’, ‘relationships between teachers and students’, ‘whānau support & whānau/school relationships’.

With regard to the first relationships sub theme (peer relationships), it was evident that belonging to a positive peer group was the primary factor for the participants most positive descriptions of their face to face schooling experiences. However, when most of the participants’ peer relationships broke down, they elected to avoid their school environs. This inevitably led to their ‘alienation’ from their face-to-face schools. Moreover, they did not find the support they needed from school pastoral care systems.

In relation to the second relationships sub theme (relationships between teachers and students), I would conclude that the participants in this study could all recall some positive relationships with teachers in their face to face schooling environments. Several participants recalled the teacher they were closest to was their teacher of Te Reo Māori who treated them like a member of their own whānau.

Not all interactions with teachers however, were positive and all the participants recalled experiences of being subjected to teacher deficit discourses. They all believed that they had experienced ‘low expectations’ from some of their former (face-to-face school) teachers. ,

Finally, with regard to the last relationship sub theme (whānau support & whānau/school relationships) I found that whānau support was also recalled by participants as being very important to them. However, whānau involvement at secondary school in the experience of these participants is limited to formal disciplinary matters or complaints.

Close attention was also given to the second key theme of pedagogy. This discussion also necessitated consideration of a set of relevant sub themes. The key pedagogical sub-themes discussed here included: teacher centred vs. student centred pedagogies, the hidden curriculum, and institutional constraints. With regard to the first of the pedagogy sub themes (teacher centred vs student centred pedagogies), it was evident that the participants in this study all recalled supportive teachers who worked hard to make their subjects interesting and relevant for students however, a transmission pedagogy is most discussed by participants in this study. Participants in my study recalled their discomfort in traditional transmission classroom settings, similar to those critiqued by Freire (1970). They claimed their interests and learning needs were often overlooked as a result of what Freire (1970) coined a ‘banking system’ of teaching.

In relation to the next pedagogy sub theme (the hidden curriculum), the participants in this study frequently asserted that they largely encountered a mono-cultural & mono-lingual curriculum in their previous face to face schooling environments. Their reflections suggested that the teaching of Māori content, they experienced aligned with Banks and McGee-Banks (2010) descriptions of ‘contributions’ and ‘additive’ approaches.

The participants explained that Māori content was largely contained within Te Reo Māori programmes while other curriculum areas remained devoid of Māori content or was simply reduced to a ‘surface’ coating. Finally, with regard to the last key theme of ‘learner identity’, my discussions with the participants found that, despite the many challenges they faced in their former face-to-face schools the participants, they *all* viewed themselves as capable learners who were determined to pursue educational goals. Their narratives, moreover, emphasised the importance of teachers providing a ‘safe’ culturally responsive environment so that positive learner identities can be developed and strengthened.

Having concluded this discussion of the research findings, the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter Six) will next provide a description of the overall research process and findings before considering the overall implications of this research.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

This final chapter commences with a discussion of the limitations of this research. Next it recalls the overall research process and key findings – before considering the general implications of these findings. This chapter concludes with some closing reflections and a pertinent whakataukī.

### **Limitations**

Due to both funding and time constraints, the sample size of this qualitative study was not large (nine participants). This research still generated a deep pool of rich data which may not have been obtained via a quantitative study. The findings which emerge from the data I collected aligns with the findings of other relevant research projects that have explored Māori experiences of secondary schooling in the Waitaha region (see Clarke 2010; Torepe, 2011; Hinden-Millar, 2012; Paniora, 2017). Nevertheless, it would still be interesting to conduct further ongoing/longitudinal research with a larger number of ‘alienated’ Young Adult Māori students residing in the Waitaha region. A larger study could help test the extent to which the experiences of the participants in this study are typical of other ‘alienated’ Young Adult Māori students in the Waitaha region.

Additionally, similar projects conducted in other regions may provide a significant body of data that could help illustrate a national picture of the experiences of ‘alienated’ Young Adult Māori students. This may be of real interest to iwi, hapū and various urban Māori communities, Te Kura management, staff and other key stakeholders. While my inter-related roles as a Pākehā teacher and researcher may have had the potential to pose limitations, this was mitigated by my ongoing engagement with the participants and their whānau and my efforts to regularly engage with key Māori stakeholders (see Chapter Three).

I also worked closely with my colleague Ms Jane Brown (visiting Māori liaison teacher) who accompanied me whenever I went to the homes of the participants in conjunction with her own work. In terms of addressing any other power-imbalances which may have arisen from my dual-identity as a Pākehā teacher/researcher, I can only reiterate the stance of Durie (1996) who concluded that what is empowering for a Māori community or whānau must be determined by that community or whānau.

Every reasonable effort was made to ensure that the research participants and their relatives (i.e. whānau/Māori communities) could make informed decisions to participate in this study. It was affirming for this study when a student elected to participate and whenever whānau members (parents) elected to attend interviews to tautoko/support them. In some instances, older whānau members expressed gratitude for having received the opportunity to ‘hear’ what was said by their younger relatives during the interview exchanges and often they found this quite revealing.

Finally, despite any limitations that may arise in relation to this research; it does appear to have been the first academic study of its type to specifically seek the voices of a group of Young Adult Māori students enrolled with Te Kura, either locally or nationally. The participants in this academic study, consequently, specifically represent a significant grouping of Māori students who have been overlooked in previous pieces of academic research about Māori schooling experiences conducted in the Waitaha region.

## **Summary of the research**

This research commenced with a literature review (Chapter Two) which described the research problem in relation to national and international literature. It drew upon Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) *ecological systems model* to provide a framework for organising this discussion. This allowed me to relate relevant pieces of literature to the overlapping historical (*chronosystem*), international and national (*macrosystem*), regional/local community (*exosystem*) and institutional (*mesosystem*) settings within which the research problem was nestled.

This framework also enabled me to address my personal (*microsystem*) position, or ‘cultural-locatedness’ in relation to the research problem. After addressing the overlapping contextual factors shaping the research problem, and my positioning as a Pākehā teacher/researcher researcher, I was able to introduce the key research questions that guided the development of this study. To reiterate, these questions were:

5. What are the experiences (positive and/or negative) that have brought Māori students, living in Te Waipounamu, onto the Te Kura roll?
6. How have those experiences (positive and/or negative) influenced/impacted on their educational goals and aspirations to date?
7. What do these students see as their personal strengths?



The third chapter outlined the methodology which underpinned this study. It commenced by outlining the research objectives and the methodology underpinning both phases of the overall data collection process. It then explained the influence of Kaupapa Māori research principles which underpinned the qualitative research design of this study. Next it addressed how the research design and entry into the field was negotiated. It then discussed the qualitative data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations central to this study.

The fourth chapter afforded a synopsis of the data collected through a series of semi structured interviews. The first section of this research findings chapter provided a succinct demographic profile that outlined the group's age range, gender and iwi affiliations. The narratives section that followed it introduced each participant by briefly describing their background and outlining some of their key responses to questions asked during their pre-interview questionnaires and interviews. Significant factors that may have influenced their schooling experiences were also discussed in depth. After completing this presentation of all the participants' interviewees' narratives, Chapter Four concluded with an outline of the overarching themes that emerged from the interviews. These key themes included:

1. Relationships
2. Pedagogy
3. Learner identity

These key themes (above) provided the framework for the data analysis discussion which occurred in the research findings which followed (Chapter Five). Therefore, the first of the themes to be discussed in my data analysis chapter (Chapter Five) was the significance of 'relationships.' This theme generated a lot of data. Hence a set of three sub-themes were constructed to enable a critique of the various relationships that were of principal concern. These sub themes included, 'peer relationships', 'relationships between teachers and students', 'whānau support & 'whānau/school relationships'. Next, attention was given to the second key theme of 'pedagogy.' This discussion also required a set of relevant sub themes. The key 'pedagogy' sub-themes discussed at this point included: 'teacher centred vs. student centred pedagogies', the 'hidden curriculum', and 'institutional constraints'. Finally, my analysis of the last key theme of 'learner identity' highlighted the participants' positive re-storying of their learner identities since leaving their former face-to-face schooling environs. Having provided a summary of the research which preceded this concluding chapter (Chapter Six), the next passage pays attention to the research implications.

## Research implications

None of the Young Adult Māori students I interviewed from the Waitaha area attended the same school and yet the factors that led to their ‘alienation’ from their differing face-to-face secondary school settings were strikingly similar. It has been argued elsewhere in this thesis that the insights and experiences of the nine participants align closely with the voices of Māori students collected in previous research conducted locally (Clarke (2010); nationally (Bishop et al., 2003).

In some instances, I would add that the voices of the participants in my study also echoed the voices of Indigenous students recorded in Canada (Steeves et al., 2014). While Te Kura has the largest Māori roll in New Zealand, it must be noted that many of these Māori students were previously affiliated to face-to-face schools. A large group of Māori students at Te Kura are in the 16-19-years Young Adult category. These students often tend to enrol with very low achievement levels. This is significant because it reveals that many Young Adult Māori students are not necessarily achieving their potential in New Zealand’s traditional face-to-face secondary schools system.

The schooling narratives that emerged from this research demonstrate that, despite many years of research (Bishop et al., 2003; Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014); plus numerous Government initiatives to enhance the quality of teaching Ministry of Education, *Ka Hikitia: Managing for success. Māori education strategy* (2008-2012). Ministry of Education. (2011). *Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners*. Ministry of Education (2013). *Accelerating success: Ka Hikitia 2013-2017*. He Kāhano 2010; *Kia Eke Panuku*, 2013-2016); The participants in this Waitaha study did not regularly encounter ‘culturally responsive practices’ in their respective school settings. While the participants were quick to identify supportive teachers and some positive classroom experiences – they also advised me that these positive interactions and experiences were sometimes over shadowed by negative interactions. This has implications because the Young Adult Māori students who are alienated from face-to-face school settings are often ‘deficit theorised’ in ways similar to those described by Bishop et al. (2003); or described elsewhere in educational literature as being part of the ‘tail of underachievement in New Zealand education’ (Education and Science Committee, 2008).

The participants in this research shared insights which demonstrated that they have much to teach us even if previously their voices were either not sought or lost in a sea of quantitative data spread sheets. Each of the participants in this research shared views that provide us with

important clues on ‘how’ to address challenges facing Māori students in Waitaha secondary schools. It was significant that the suggestions of participants in this study aligned closely with other pieces of research conducted in Waitaha during the last decade (see Clarke, 2010; Paniora, 2017; Torepe, 2011). Also, the participants in this study shared sentiments that were similar to aspects of Māori student ‘voice’ captured by other researchers elsewhere in Aotearoa/New Zealand (particularly Bishop et al., 2003; Macfarlane, A. H. et al., 2014).

All the participants in this research emphasised their need to be able to attend local face-to-face schools where they could feel validated as being ‘Māori’ learners. They shared painful experiences of being in unsafe learning environments and their yearning for culturally responsive learning environments and pedagogies they felt would help them achieve educational success ‘as Māori’. The participants in this research clearly had aspirations that they believed were not adequately supported while in their former school settings. However, the narratives of the participants clearly emphasised the high value they each placed on education and the dreams and goals they aspired to.

For example, each of the participants in this study repeatedly emphasised the value they placed on strengthening and/or reclaiming their knowledge of Te Ao Māori (the Māori World) and Te Reo Māori (the Māori language). They each emphasised that they should have been better supported by their former (face-to-face) schools to achieve their cultural aspirations. This collective stance, in turn, recalls A. H. Macfarlane (2004) who stated that: “It is no longer acceptable to many Māori that success at school in one’s own country should come at the cost of their own language and culture” (p. 14).

On the other hand, each of the participants stressed that Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu has played a significant role in changing their lives for the better. They shared differing experiences to explain why they felt that Te Kura had enabled them to continue with their schooling when they could no longer contend with hostile face-to-face schooling environments. It is significant that the participants all concurred that their regular engagement with various staff affiliated to the Ōtautahi regional office of Te Kura has provided them with the encouragement and support they deemed necessary to re-story their schooling experiences and regain positive learner identities.

## Closing reflections

On the day I began writing this final chapter, I received an email from one of the participants (Participant Six). She was keen to catch-up with me and asked how my study was going. I immediately wrote back to her and gave her an update on my progress and when I asked her about her own life, she replied:

I'm doing reasonably well. Still a few things I need to sort out which brings me to why I've reached back out to Te Kura. It's the one place I trust and has helped me and pushed me along many paths in all the right directions in the past. (Participant Six: personal communication, 18 April, 2018)

While I felt glad to receive Participant Six's encouragement to complete this research, and was also proud to be able to share her affirmation of my colleagues' work, here in the Ōtautahi regional office of Te Kura. However, it was sobering to be reminded that her prior experiences of face-to-face schooling system had been so challenging.

As a teacher/researcher, it concerns me that, despite all the Government research and policy initiatives of the last three decades (described elsewhere); Participant Six and her peers still face many challenges to obtain the educational qualifications they will need to navigate their way in a rapidly changing world.

It is vital that the New Zealand schooling system and teachers like myself, not only hear the voices of Young Adult Māori Students; but also critically reflect upon how we respond to the insights they have provided to us through these narratives.

To conclude, I would like to close this research with a whakataukī that has relevance to the findings of this study. This whakataukī [proverb] was shared with Te Kura staff and students by a kuia [female elder] at Rehua Marae during a professional development day. The metaphor implicit in her choice of whakataukī emphasised the importance of creating a nurturing environment for Māori students. As we sat in the whare looking towards the harakeke in the garden, she reminded us that even in the heart of the city, if the right environment is created, the birds will gather, sing and flourish:

*Hutia te rito o te harakeke*

*Kei whea e komako e ko*

*Uia mia koe ki ahau;*

‘If you pluck out the heart of the flaxbush how will the komako sing?’

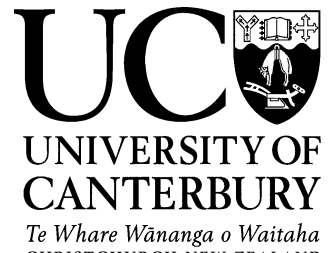
## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Information sheet for the Board of Trustees: Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu

Telephone: +64 022 2247 478

Email: Averill.manning@gmail.com

[Date]



#### Master of Education Thesis Research

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga:** Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu Young Adult Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

#### Information sheet for the Board of Trustees: Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu

I am enrolled in the Master of Education programme at the University of Canterbury. I am also employed as a team leader at *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu* (Ōtautahi Regional Office). As you will already know, for my thesis I am exploring the schooling experiences and aspirations of Young Adult Māori students affiliated to the Ōtautahi (Christchurch) regional office of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu so that our school can respond more effectively to these students needs and aspirations.

I require the permission of the Board of Trustees (Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu) to conduct my research. If your school chooses to take part in this research, student participants will be

asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire which will ask them questions that help me to create a general picture of the student participants' ages, iwi affiliations, previous and current schooling experiences and aspirations for the future. This will also help student participants to prepare for one semi-structured interview (lasting one hour). The interview will ask them similar questions to the pre-interview questionnaire to provide more depth to the data already collected. It will be arranged at a time and location that suits them. They will be invited to review the transcript of their interviews to ensure accuracy.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. If a student chooses to participate, she/he will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including the withdrawal of any information provided without penalty. If they do withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to them, provided this is practically achievable.

Particular care will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this research. Student names will be known only to me and a transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. To minimise risk of identification, student names will not appear in any transcript or manuscript. All data collected will be stored securely, including locked storage and electronic data in password protected form at the University of Canterbury (and at my home) for five years following the completion of the thesis. Data will then be destroyed.

The data collected will be used only for the purpose of this research and any journal articles and conference papers that may result from this research. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above) or my supervisor, Professor Angus Macfarlane ([angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz)). If you have a complaint about the research process, you may contact the Chair, Educational Research Human ethics committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If the Board of Trustees agrees for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by [day/month/year]. I look forward to working with you and thank you in advance for your support.

Nāku noa nā

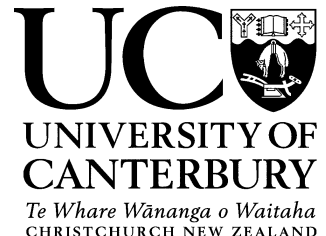
Averill Manning

## **Appendix B: Consent Form for the Board of Trustees, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu**

Telephone: +64 [022 2247 478]

Email: [Averill.manning@gmail.com]

[Date]



### **Master of Education Thesis Research**

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga:** Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu Young Adult Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

### **Consent Form for the Board of Trustees, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu**

We have been provided with a full explanation of this project and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about it. We understand what will be required of us, as a Board of Trustees, if we agree to allow students from our school to take part in this project.

We understand that our students' participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any stage without penalty. We also understand that any information or opinions students provide to the researcher (Averill Manning) will be kept confidential to the researcher (and transcriber) and that any published or reported results will not identify them.

We understand the risk associated with students taking part and how this will be managed. Likewise, we understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury (and the researcher's home) and will be destroyed after five years.

We understand that the Board of Trustees (and student participants) will be able to receive a report on the findings of this study.

I have provided my email details below (on behalf of the Board of Trustees: *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu*). We understand that if we require further information, we can contact the researcher, Averill Manning (details provided above), or her supervisor, Professor Angus Macfarlane (angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz).

If the Board of Trustees of *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu* have any complaints to make about the research process, we can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee at University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz). By signing below, I agree, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, for *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu* to participate in this research project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

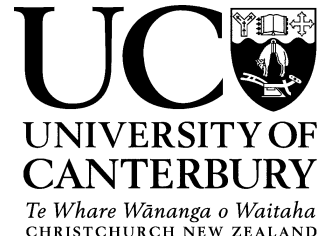
Please return this completed consent form to Averill Manning in the envelope provided by [Day/Month].



## Appendix C: Information sheet for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu student participants

Telephone: +64 3 345 8187

Email: Averill.manning@gmail.com



[Date]

### Master of Education Thesis Research

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga:** Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu Young Adult Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

### Information sheet for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu student participants

I am enrolled in the Master of Education programme at the University of Canterbury. I am also employed as a teacher and team leader at *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu*. For my thesis I am exploring the schooling experiences and aspirations of Young Adult Māori students affiliated to the Ōtautahi (Christchurch) regional office of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu so that our school can respond more effectively to these students needs and aspirations.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research. If you choose to take part in this research you will be asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire and to participate in one semi-structured, recorded interview (lasting approximately one hour). The pre-interview questionnaire will ask you questions about you that help me to create a general picture of participants' age, gender, iwi affiliations, previous and current schooling experiences and aspirations for the future. This will also help you to prepare for the interview. The interview will ask similar questions and provide me with more depth of information. It will be arranged

at a time and location that suits you. You will be invited to review the transcript of the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including the withdrawal of any information provided without penalty. If you do withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, provided this is practically achievable.

Particular care will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this research. Your name will be known only to myself and a transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. To minimise risk of identification, your name will not appear in any transcript or manuscript. All data collected will be stored securely, including locked storage and electronic data in password protected form at the University of Canterbury (and at my home) for five years following the completion of the thesis. Data will then be destroyed. The data collected will be used only for the purpose of this research and any journal articles and conference papers that may result from this research.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above) or my supervisor, Professor Angus Macfarlane ([angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz)). If you have a complaint about the research process, you may contact the Chair, Educational Research Human ethics committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by [day/month/year]. I look forward to working with you and thank you in advance for your contributions.

Nāku noa nā

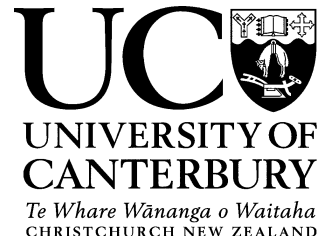
Averill Manning

## **Appendix D: Consent form for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu student participants**

Telephone: +64 [022 2247 478]

Email: [Averill.manning@gmail.com]

[Date]



### **Master of Education Thesis Research**

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga:** Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu Young Adult Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

### **Consent Form for Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu student participants**

I have been provided with a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher (and transcriber) and that any published or reported results will not identify me.

I understand the risk associated with taking part and how this will be managed.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury (and the researcher's home) and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that I will am able to receive a report on the findings of this study. I have provided my email details below for this purpose.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Averill Manning, or her supervisor, Professor Angus Macfarlane. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

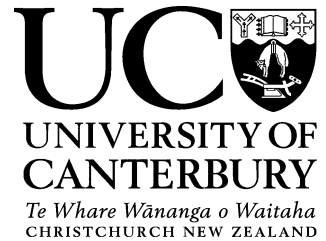
Please return this completed consent form to Averill Manning in the envelope provided by [Day/Month].

## Appendix E: Information sheet for transcriber

Telephone: +64 3 345 8187

Email: Averill.manning@gmail.com

[Date]



### Master of Education Thesis Research

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga:** Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu Young Adult Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

### Information sheet for Transcriber

I am enrolled in the Master of Education programme at the University of Canterbury. I am also employed as a teacher and team leader at *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu*. For my thesis I am exploring the schooling experiences and aspirations of Young Adult Māori students affiliated to the Ōtautahi (Christchurch) regional office of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu so that our school can respond more effectively to these students needs and aspirations.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research as a transcriber of the interviews data I will collect. If you choose to transcribe this research, you will be asked to complete a declaration of confidentiality. Please note that the research interviewees (Young Adult Māori students) will be asked pre-interview questionnaire and to participate in one semi-structured, recorded interview (lasting approximately one hour). The pre-interview questionnaire will ask them questions about themselves that help me to create a general picture of participants' age, gender, iwi affiliations, previous and current schooling experiences and aspirations for the future.

This will also help them to prepare for the interview. The interviews, which you are invited to transcribe, will ask similar questions and provide me with more depth of information. These interviews will be arranged at a time and location that suits the interviewees. They will be invited to review the transcript of the interview (produced by you as the transcriber), to ensure accuracy.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. If students choose to participate, they have the permission of their school to do so. Moreover, they will retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including the withdrawal of any information provided without penalty. If they do withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to them, provided this is practically achievable.

Particular care will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this research. Therefore, if you choose to transcribe the audio-recorded data I collect from the interviews, the interviewees' names will only be known only to myself and you, in your capacity as the transcriber. Hence you will need to sign the confidentiality statement attached. Please note that interviewees will be advised that, to minimise the risk of identification, their names will not appear in any transcript or manuscript produced by myself or the transcriber. All data collected will be stored securely, including locked storage and electronic data in password protected form at the University of Canterbury (and at my home) for five years following the completion of the thesis. Data will then be destroyed. The data collected will be used only for the purpose of this research and any journal articles and conference papers that may result from this research.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above) or my supervisor, Professor Angus Macfarlane ([angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz)). If you choose to participate as my transcriber, and have a complaint about the research process, you may contact the Chair, Educational Research Human ethics committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)). If you agree to participate as the transcriber of interview recordings, please complete the attached confidentiality statement form and return it to me in the envelope provided by [day/month/year]. I look forward to working with you and thank you in advance for your contributions.

Nāku noa nā

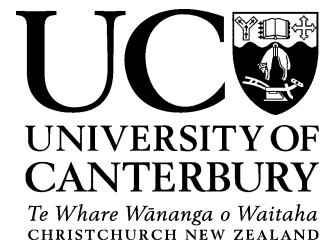
Averill Manning

## **Appendix F: Declaration of confidentiality form for interviews transcriber**

Telephone: +64 [022 2247 478]

Email: [Averill.manning@gmail.com]

[Date]



### **Master of Education Thesis Research**

**Mai i te tirohanga ākonga:** Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu Young Adult Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region.

### **Declaration of Confidentiality form for interviews transcriber**

I have been provided with a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about it.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project as the transcriber of audio-recordings of interviews conducted by the researcher (Averill Manning).

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and myself as the transcriber (and that any published or reported results will not identify me or the interviewees).

I understand the risk associated for the interviewees taking part and how this will be managed (as outlined in the Transcriber's Information form provided to me).

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury (and the researcher's home) and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Averill Manning, or her supervisor, Professor Angus Macfarlane. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee at University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project as transcriber in accordance with the *Declaration of Confidentiality*, outlined above. Hence I agree to transcribe the interviews recorded by Averill Manning in conjunction with her M.Ed thesis research and I undertake to ensure the continued anonymity and confidentiality of those people she interviews before, during and after the research is completed.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

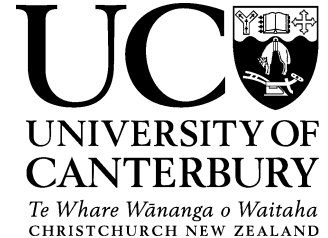
Please return this completed confidentiality declaration form to Averill Manning in the envelope provided by [Day/Month].



## Appendix G: Interviewee verification of interview

Telephone: +64 022 2247 478

Email: [averill.manning@gmail.com](mailto:averill.manning@gmail.com)



### Master of Education Thesis Research

*Mai i te tirohanga ākonga - Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu Māori student narratives about their schooling experiences and aspirations*

Kia Ora ,

Thank you so much for your involvement in my research project. I really enjoyed interviewing you and collecting your reflections and insights about your educational journey to Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu. You raised some really interesting issues regarding your educational journey. I was particularly impressed with your determination to continue to work hard to achieve your educational goals.

I have enclosed your transcript. Please read through it and let me know if you would like to make any clarifications to it or if you have anything to add to it.

Thanks once more for your willingness to be interviewed for this research.

Nga mihi,

Averill

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